The Chronicles of a Great Prince

MARGUERITE BRYANT
AND
GEORGE MCANNALLY

THE CHRONICLES OF A GREAT PRINCE

BOOKS BY MARGUERITE BRYANT

THE HEIGHTS
A COURAGEOUS MARRIAGE
THE SHADOW OF THE STONE
THE DOMINANT PASSION
THE ADJUSTMENT
ANNE KEMPBURN: TRUTH SEEKER
FELICITY CROFTON
CHRISTOPHER HIBBAULT: ROADMAKER

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OF A

GREAT PRINCE

BY

MARGUERITE BRYANT

And

GEORGE H. McANNALLY

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CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
Introduction		
I.	Mr. Carfax Accepts a Tutorship	3
II.	Mr. Carfax Makes Discoveries	16
III.	Prophetic Days	27
IV.	Tragedy and Ceremony	36
V.	Widening Horizons	53
VI.	The Deeds of Youth	65
VII.	Raphael	73
VIII.	The Adventure of the Brigands	82
IX.	Maria Lais	92
X.	Episodes	96
XI.	The Guild of St. Augustine	104
XII.	A Perilous Defence	125
XIII.	The Duchess of Alquarto	145
XIV.	Raphael's Marriage	159
XV.	Fire and Smoke	164
XVI.	What Happened on an April Morning	171
XVII.	Disaster and Again Disaster	192
XVIII.	The Diary of Queen Tessa	209
XIX.	The Cloud Lifts	221
XX.	A Bargain	234
XXI.	The Return of Raphael	244
XXII.	The Queen's Diary Ends	253
XXIII.	A Woman Acts	264
XIV.	A Fatal Marriage	276
XXV.	A Crisis	286
XXVI.	The Revolution	299
XXVII.	Max	322
XXVIII.	To Save Her Crown!	334

DEDICATED TO

PEGGY
MICHAEL
JOHN
PATRICK
RACHEL

DEAR CHILDREN :—

If you are not now,—some of you!—too old to be so addressed—Here at last is the Book promised you so many years ago, when you were all of you really children. That it is, in many respects, a different book to the collection of stories which were *your* Chronicles and that it stops half way through the history that so enthralled you, is the fault, first, of your grown years, because what was of supreme interest to you once is of secondary interest to some of you now, and secondly to the fact that the long-suffering public after all have a right to a say in the matter and could not be expected to cope with the mass of material from which these Chronicles have been drawn.

Still we hope you will find enough of what originally pleased you to take fresh pleasure in the printed page. We leave you in that hope. Accept 'The Chronicles' with our love!

M. B. and G. H. M.

THE CHRONICLES OF A GREAT PRINCE

INTRODUCTION

HOWEVER great a part Prince Paul d'Arenzano may have played in the drama of international politics at the beginning of the nineteenth century, very little effort has ever been made to study him apart from his work, or take into consideration the environment and education which produced so exceptional a man.

These Chronicles are an attempt to remedy that injustice by a judicial opening up of family records, letters and journals written by friends or contemporaries, and reconstructing from these as far as lies in our power, a living portrait of the Great Prince.

Since the editors are more concerned with presenting this portrait than with recording historical events, they have not scrupled at times to translate into narrative form the abundant if somewhat unwieldly mass of material they have collected, hoping by this means to humanize otherwise dreary matter and so to bring into sympathetic focus the lives, loves and fates of men, who having played their part well or ill, on the stage of life, have passed into the Unknown and left, it may be lesser men, to tread in their turn the boards they once filled with their presence and dominated with their personality.

INTRODUCTION

The part played by the English tutor, Henry Carfax, who controlled the most impressionable years of Prince d'Arenzano's life is so important that we may be pardoned if we commence by discovering how he came to fill his post and with what sort of mind he did so. Matters which are easily traceable in letters and notes belonging to the Rushford and Carfax families.

The Chronicles of a Great Prince

CHAPTER I

MR. CARFAX ACCEPTS A TUTORSHIP

I

OUR earliest records of the d'Arenzano family, apart from family records themselves, are found in the letters and diaries of Henry Carfax, a young Englishman of ability and enterprise, who in the autumn of 1820 accepted the tutorship of the young counts of Arenzano, only, it appears after close perusal of his diaries, after long consideration and much persuasion.

A cousin of Prince d'Arenzano's, Count Everard d'Arenzano, then attached to the Romanzian Legation in London, was responsible for the finding of Henry Carfax, and posterity is indebted to him for that find, for there is no doubt that Carfax's own character, even more than his real scholarship, was largely responsible for the building up of the character of Paul d'Arenzano, our Great Prince.

One gathers that Carfax's reluctance to undertake the task was, in the first place, due to dislike of filling a subordinate position in the house of a foreign prince of however exalted a lineage. Orensē itself, a small independent state with a distinct race, laws, customs of its own, was still linked in

the mind of Europe, for all practical purposes, with Romanzia, that once powerful, but now (in 1820) degenerate country.

The second reason for Carfax's reluctance seems to have been the very doubtful character which Count Everard gave his young relations. They were, by his account, confirmed tutor-breakers, having had five tutors in two years. Carfax evidently pictured them as arrogant young cubs, and probably vicious, though we gather the Count refused to tabulate either their virtues or their vices, only assuring Carfax that they had their share of intellect.

But the salary offered was princely; Carfax spoke Romanzian fairly well, owing to a Romanzian friend at Oxford, and in the end Count Everard prevailed, and Carfax found himself towards the end of September, 1820, enroute for Orensē.

II

Travelling in those days was no luxurious affair of trains de luxe and 'wagon-lits'. Europe was slowly coming to a state of equilibrium after her tempestuous years of war. Still, provided one had money, there was no special danger in travelling, whatever the discomforts might be, judged by modern standards.

Carfax found himself descending from his last stage at a small inn perched on the shoulder of a pine-clad hill.

In the rough paved court before the inn, some saddle horses were waiting, and on the wooden outside staircase, two white-clad figures were lounging. They watched with unmoved faces as the ponderous coach swung into the courtyard and the few passengers for Foresti, the little frontier village of Orensē, descended.

As Carfax looked round him curiously, the two figures came forward.

"Mr. Carfax?" questioned the elder one.

Carfax bowed.

"We rode over to meet you. I am Paul d'Arenzano, and this is my brother, Raphael."

Carfax had just sufficient assurance not to betray his amazement, for amazed he was. Nothing had prepared him for either the size or appearance of his pupils.

They stood gravely surveying each other, neither party betraying the least embarrassment at the mutual scrutiny.

On the one hand they saw the well set up figure of a man with a keen, resolute, if rugged face. He was in riding dress, for he knew the last part of his journey would be in the saddle. The younger of his two inspectors ran over the details of his dress with approval in his brown eyes; the elder boy met his glance with a certain calm interest, as one who measures swords with an adversary.

But Carfax saw something very different. The boys—for they were no more in years, being thirteen and fourteen respectively—were remarkably tall. They had the manners and assurance of full age and yet conveyed a sense of breeding that ill-fitted with Carfax's mental images of two young barbarians. But it was their surprising good looks that overthrew his first judgment of them. Superficially they were alike, but Carfax was not a superficial observer and he discerned the difference almost as soon as he perceived the likeness. Both were tall, but Paul, the elder, was more than tall. He was built on the scale of big men and might easily have passed for seventeen. There was nothing clumsy in his bigness, and it was disguised by his just proportions and easy carriage. His finely cut features were strong and masterful, and his dark eyes curiously compelling.

The boy breathed an air of arrogance and authority that was a danger signal for the future which his slightly formal courtesy did not disguise.

Raphael was perhaps two inches shorter than his brother. His agile form had the grace and easy movement of some wild animal, his eyes were surprisingly alert and Carfax fancied he saw a faint mockery lurking in their depth. His manner was disarming, with none of the arrogance of the elder boy, but displaying an innocent candor which did not altogether set Carfax at his ease, since his knowledge of youth was wide and accurate.

Once free from observing eyes, the boys' horses showed a restlessness that would have been disconcerting to unaccustomed riders. Carfax saw, however, that his pupils were quite equal to the occasion, so merely kept a watch on his own steed, without offering any remark on the behavior of the others. By and by they also took to quieter ways and he intercepted a meaning glance between his escort.

On the other side of the ridge behind the frontier village the ground descended again, crossing a fertile plain dotted with small villages, and beyond the plain there rose, ridge upon ridge, the vast forests of Orensē; clothing the lower slopes of the mountain range, which shut in the country like a wall on the east; belted with pine and skirted with oak and beech, trailing olives on its lower slopes, while on its highest summits the snow still lingered, though it was late spring.

The boys rode on each side of Carfax, talking volubly and pressing the conversation which way they would. They asked innumerable questions concerning the customs in English schools, his own tastes and predilections: Carfax's replies were cautiously worded and now and again he got in a question of his own.

The day was hot and he was not sorry when the road entered the forest and they reached a higher, cooler level. It was unspeakably beautiful and for a time the boys were silent. It was Raphael who spoke first. He had been watching Carfax's horse anxiously.

"Anything wrong?" asked the rider carelessly.

"Oh no. Senecarib is going splendidly today—only he had just that expression when ——" he hesitated.

"Yes?" demanded Carfax politely.

"When he turned and bit Monsieur Mancara right through the boot. I should not like it to happen to you, but perhaps you are not afraid of horses?"

"Not particularly."

"Monsieur Mancara was. He was afraid of many things." A beatific smile crossed his face.

"Was he your last tutor?"

" Yes." A pause. "He committed suicide last spring."

At this startling news Carfax glanced at Paul, who was gazing straight ahead with an unmoved face.

"Indeed? How sad," remarked the new tutor evenly. "And have you done no work since?"

"Father Clement has given us some instruction," put in Paul suddenly, "but there is not much time for work here, you know."

"I can well believe it with such a forest close at hand."

"Don't go exploring the forest alone," said Raphael hastily, "or you'll get eaten by wolves."

"I'll be careful."

"Raphael's not joking"—this from Paul sharply. "A mile farther is the Great Barrier and beyond that to the top of the mountains it's all wolf preserves. It's safe for the keepers or anyone who knows, but not for strangers."

"What an odd thing to preserve," murmured Carfax.

Paul shot a haughty glance at the utterer of an implied criticism.

"We have preserved wolves for sport since 1660. The barrier was put up in our gradfather's time. There was a bad winter and the wolves got a lot of people and lastly a son of the house, so they shut them in. Every year we shoot

so many to keep the numbers down. It's grand sport, but we are not allowed to go till we are seventeen."

Carfax's eyes travelled over Paul, whose fourteen years seemed of such extenuated length.

They stopped once to rest their horses by a little rushing stream and then Paul, who had been silent for a long time, remarked, "It's shorter across the plain but it's insufferably hot."

"And we thought you would like to see the forest," put in Raphael.

"It's worth seeing," said Carfax quietly.

The moderation of his remark won their approval. He had not committed the error of rhapsodizing over their beloved country and he appeared to have forgotten the existence of wolves, both faults which former gentlemen had committed on like occasions; neither had he betrayed annoyance over the lengthened route.

Their Cousin Everard's protégé started with marks to the good, though they only qualified him as an enemy not to be despised.

In a few minutes they came out on a green clearing, and there before them lay the Castle of Aranzano.

III

It stood on a grassy eminence, round which, on two sides the stream's noisy waters found placid harborage in a wide moat. On three sides the forest came within a thousand yards of the green space, and there stopped abruptly as if an enchanter's wand had set a magic barrier to its riotous growth.

The Castle itself was a grim building of tower and turret, curtain wall and bastion, with an immense gateway between two towers. To the left was a bigger solitary tower, reached

now from the outside by a separate bridge and a little arched door that looked absurdly inadequate in the vast grey space of wall. From a turret a flag hung motionless about its staff.

There were few windows looking out to the entrance, and these were mostly narrow slits, cutting the greyness like pointed arrows.

The whole place seemed asleep in the warm spring sunlight. A grey memorial of immemorial things, of strength, endurance, unchangeableness and remoteness.

The two silent figures on each side of Carfax watched with furtive anxiety. Their very silence was eloquent, seeming to mock him, saying, "Do you think to bring your two-penny ideals to roost here, to turn our ways to suit your ridiculous island prejudices?"

They had reined up. The action had been involuntary on the part of Carfax and it was he who first moved his horse and looked at the elder boy.

"It looks like a place that has sent men into the world."

It was his sole remark, and he saw under the tanned skin of the boy a scarlet flush and a gleam of emotion, gone almost as soon as it came, leaving the arrogant, almost insolent pride dominant; but it taught Carfax in what that pride had root. He ceased for the present to resent it.

They rode in at the great gates. Within, was a vast courtyard doubtless once crowded with buildings but now clear and void.

On the western side was the living house, evidently remodelled in the last two hundred years. There were a range of pointed windows, and here and there a stone carved balcony jutted out. The great hall of entrance occupied the center of this house and was approached by a wide flight of steps. Here was the first sign of life.

Two small boys, some servants, and a great variety of

dogs awaited them. Two grooms came forward to take the horses. The bigger of the two boys was dancing on the lowest step in enthusiastic excitement.

"What a time you have been, Paul! Is this the Englishman? How do you do, Mr. Carfax."

"Be quiet, Baby." Paul dealt the obstreperous young person a light box on the ears. "Mr. Carfax, these are my younger brothers. This is Sylvestro and that is Damien."

The youngest boy came down the steps slowly, surveying the new tutor critically as he did so. The two boys were a remarkable contrast. Sylvestro, even at that age, was a clumsy replica of Paul minus his assurance and gravity. He seemed brimming over with vitality, and good-humor smiled from his merry dark eyes. Undaunted by the brotherly rebuke, he hung on Paul's arm and watched the newcomer with a friendly smile.

Damien held out his hand. His aloofness was as distinct from Sylvestro's demonstrativeness as was his appearance. Here were the fair hair and dark eyes of Count Everard, but here also were the curiously fine features of the elder boys, emphasized even in the nine-year-old face, as if Nature till then had been merely trying what she could do in the way of fashioning beauty, and had at last brought her experiments to a satisfactory conclusion.

In manner Damien was just aloof and courteous with a courtesy that matched oddly with his few years.

They went up the steps together, and a servant waiting at the top hurried forward with a silver salver in his hand.

To him—in the *patois*—Paul called out fiercely and rapidly a command to go and take his silly head with him, and the man vanished with a half hidden smile. Raphael visibly brightened, Damien gazed at Paul with a heightened color and Sylvestro called out:

"But Paul, why—?"

"Silence, little fool!" came in the swift soft *patois* again, and then to Carfax in his clear Romanzian.

"Will you wish to see my mother at once, or go straight to your room, Mr. Carfax?"

Carfax decidedly preferred to remove the traces of travel before encountering any more of the family; moreover he wanted time to arrange his thoughts.

The four solemnly escorted him across the immense hall, at one end of which a great black staircase of chestnut wood wound up in a double flight to a stone gallery. At the opposite end of the hall was a fireplace where even on this warm spring day a fire flickered.

The hall was so large that Carfax had quite a shock when they left the wide gallery, that ran over the entrance doors, and plunged into narrow dark passages full of inequalities, and with bare stone walls.

The passages led in the end to his own apartment and the abode of the two elder boys, situated in a tower at the south-west angle of the Castle, the three floors of the tower and the connecting wing being entirely given over to him and his charges.

He was ushered into his room, the heavy door closed and he was at last alone to sort out his ideas and prepare for the still more formidable task of meeting Prince and Princess d'Arenzano.

IV

At the foot of the staircase the boys discussed the new arrival with freedom and animation.

"But Paul," insisted Sylvestro, ready to dodge possible chastisement, "why did you do it?"

"Do what?"

"Not do it, Baby means," drawled Raphael, "the Service, that is. You had not said it was to be missed."

"It would have left us no chance," growled the elder brother, rather sulkily.

"You gave Mancara the Bread and Salt," remarked Damien.

Paul flashed round on him.

"This Englishman is no Mancara. It will be no job for you babies, this time. Keep out of it. Raphael and I will manage—if he is to go."

"Oh, do you think he mayn't?" chimed in Sylvestro, eagerly. "I hope not, he looks so nice."

Raphael interposed.

"You mind what Paul says and attend to your own business. Be off!"

The two younger boys obediently betook themselves to their own devices and the elder remained talking quietly; they said nothing at first of what was in their minds, till suddenly Raphael remarked:

"He's worth testing anyhow."

Paul grinned.

"We'll do that. We can now, that's why I didn't give him the Service. I wanted to feel free."

V

On the west and inhabited side of the Castle were two terraces, and below them a drop of thirty feet to the wide meadow land which stretched away to the silver placid waters of a distant lake. Beyond that were lower slopes of forest and then the sunset!

Here on the terrace, Princess d'Arenzano walked with Henry Carfax.

If Carfax's first recorded impressions of that remarkable

woman are as trustworthy as the rest of his careful records, they are perhaps worth giving. The implied doubt reflects no discredit on Carfax, but though nothing in his life betrays it, there remains an impression that the cool-headed young man of twenty-five never quite regarded Princess d'Arenzano with that spirit of detached criticism which he accorded to other women. The only evidence, however, in his writing lies in the complete lack of such criticism and a very careful record of all her speech with him.

Here on the terrace they walked on the evening of June 4th, 1817, Carfax secretly wondering that so young and beautiful a woman should be the mother of those four great boys.

"She took me out on the terrace," he writes, "and in the open air I thought her even more beautiful than indoors. From her Raphael gets his vivid coloring and sparkling eyes. There is a subtle graciousness about her that balances her quick gestures, and above all I judge her to be a woman of intellect, clever, far-sighted and capable of a wide point of view. She is a Romanzian. One feels she has only absorbed just so much of this atmosphere as was necessary for her happiness, and in return has distilled into the grim ghosts of tradition something of her own living personality. I judge her, too, to be a happy woman; she spoke much of her sons, and her desire that they should be well-educated men. 'We are so remote from the world here,' she remarked, 'that it is doubly needful to train their intellects. The d'Arenzanos at least have never been mere stupid brigands, but my boys must be able to see beyond their own mountains and forests!

" 'You will find them worth your time, Mr. Carfax. Paul is difficult, I admit it. He has great strength of mind beyond his years. Raphael, I believe to be brilliant if he can get steady tuition. He follows Paul's lead in everything, I fear, and Paul, dear fellow, is a little head-strong!'

"She apologized for the absence of her husband, saying that he was at Melino, which is their capital and the only town of any size in the province, with the exception of Courno.

"Also she told me that they very seldom went to Cardozza.

" 'Orensē is generally sufficient for us and though I am a Romanzian, I have my reasons for disliking Cardozza these days.'

"She sighed."

Carfax must have known enough of Romanzian politics to understand what was implied, and how the mean ingratitude of King Ferdinand II. towards those who had saved his throne when Europe was rocking to dissolution had estranged from him all the oldest Romanzian families, so that they avoided both the Government and the social life of the capital.

It was night before Prince d'Arenzano appeared and Carfax records the final impression of his disconcerting day with his usual clarity.

"I suppose I cannot honestly say," he writes, "that Count Everard described his brother to me in misleading terms, yet I had got in my mind a picture of an elderly corpulent gentleman too lazy to rule his own household. But Prince Victor is six feet two, and carries his height with such ease that it is unobtrusive. He has the same vivacious and restless energy as Sylvestro. He appears indeed a kindly simple soul, very desirous of doing all that is expected of him by his gracious lady, and the obligations of his name. He is clearly adored by his family, who mingle their respectful bearing towards him with a quaint pride, which induces them to show him off much as if he were a clever child.

"We supped together in a big plainly furnished room, the two elder boys with us, and afterwards the Prince took me

into the hall and we sat in one of the windows and discussed my pupils.

" 'They are good boys,' he told me, 'though I can't manage them, or so my brother says. He advises me to give you a free hand. Do what you like with them so long as you make them honest men. As to brains,—we have never been accounted fools—except myself!' he added with a deprecating air which was disarming, 'but then I was never born to be the reigning prince. That was all through politics and the French!'

"I remembered that both his father and his brother had been shot for trying to stem the tide of Bonaparte's march against the Allies.

"He looked out of the window into the gathering dark and presently went on.

" 'I daresay you in England think of us as half barbarians, but we are not that. We have our own customs and laws, and as a race we have a fair record and I want my boys to sustain it. Times are changing and what did for the rest of us, won't do for the future.'

"Again he broke off abruptly.

" 'Don't let them gamble. It's in the blood and it's bad for us. You'll manage them I can see—besides Everard says so. The English have a way with the young! Paul's all right, but Raphael is the very devil!' "

Carfax left no notes as to whether his first impressions coincided with the mother or the father's estimate of their sons. It would, however, be like Carfax to preserve an open mind on the matter.

CHAPTER II

MR. CARFAX MAKES DISCOVERIES

I

THE first days were spent in exploring the place and getting accustomed to the life there. Of all this Carfax has left such abundant records that the difficulty of selection is considerable.

There was the Castle itself, with its great Armory and Muniment Rooms, its vast stables, the foresters' court, where lived the dogs and hounds, falcons, guns, and all the paraphernalia of abundant sport, and where a retinue of keepers came and went.

There was the Hall of Justice in the old Keep itself, with the little yard behind, where punishments were meted out in carefully measured gradation. Cells, pillory and whipping post, all still in use, and part of the old inviolate Law!

"We have no executions here now," Paul explained: "that only happens at Melino."

"Father made that change," commented Raphael, with a regretful sigh. "That's the Ring," he went on, pointing out two iron rings in a wall about the height of a man's shoulder from the ground. "That's the penalty for breaking any

forest law: so many hours with one's arm fastened up like that." He thrust his arm through the larger ring. Both rings were secured by a bolt and would hold a man's arm extended in such a way that he was a complete prisoner.

Carfax examined it carefully. He thought it a cruel idea, but was at pains not to say so. Adverse criticism of their manners or customs was badly received.

He soon ceased to wonder at Paul's arrogance. The young Prince of Melino (his correct title) was treated with a deference and respect that might have turned the head of the humblest boy. There was only one command and one word superior to his own and that was his father's.

The forest Carfax got to know bit by bit. It was to the whole of Orensē what the sea is to a maritime country. It called to its children with mysterious voices, it soothed their sorrows, sympathized with revolt, and added to joy. In its higher regions it gave out the very spirit of healing and no d'Arenzano could imagine recovery away from its embrace. They seldom talked of it, but its spell lay over their lives from the hour of birth to the hour of death. This applied not only to the reigning family but to all the hardy independent race of foresters who lived in and round its vast depths, who could find their way across it by instinctive touch and who drew from it their substance and made it the field of their labors.

The wolf-barrier Carfax found to be a real thing. The law forbade a married man to live there and Carfax's young charges were never allowed to go singly into its depths. Yet on mountain expeditions, they would plunge gaily through the most wolf-ridden regions and Carfax went for several such excursions before he saw a wolf.

In the late autumn and winter, there were the famous wolf drives, besides which the glory of all other sport paled. On these occasions, with certain formalities and much excite-

ment, the Prince and his friends destroyed a sufficient number of wolves to keep the packs within manageable limits during the cold and hungry months.

Those first days must have been as full of interest as minutes. Carfax allowed himself to be shown all and told all—and more than all he often suspected—by the boys. They seem to have had wit enough to discern beneath his calm acceptance of their wonders, his very real interest.

It remained to be proved whether he were also a man to be obeyed and respected, or their dupe who would leave them to order their lives as they would, so long as they performed just so much or so little work as their active young brains chose to assimilate and as he in his capacity as paid tutor could with decency accept.

II

Carfax quickly found that their intellectual ability was of no mean order and he determined to exploit it to the full as soon as he could gain their confidence, but that was a slow and tedious business.

There followed days and weeks of tortuous discoveries, silent struggles of will, and perilous moments when swift judgment and decision were all that stood between him and defeat.

Outwardly the boys were polite and courteous, but under their youthful suavity, Carfax felt them watching him, ready to seize on the least mistake and ever setting pitfalls in his way. He understood well enough that they regarded him as on probation and he meant to win.

Those were days when the 'young' of most countries received scant consideration at the hands of their elders. Prompt obedience was the one cardinal virtue by which youthful reputations rose or fell. In such manner had

Carfax himself been reared, but he was an exceptional man, years ahead of his generation. He foresaw that moral and intellectual education must go hand in hand, and were the stepladder by which the troubled world might rise to higher things. This boy, Prince Paul d'Arenzano, had it in him to be a leader of men by tradition, by temperament, and by natural ambition. It was for Carfax to lay the foundations of such a career and to clear away the obstructions that position, adulation and inborn pride had accumulated on the good ground. How far he was successful these pages will show!

Another difficulty which beset these early days was Carfax's ignorance of the laws and customs, medieval, unexpected and inviolate that fenced in their lives. They chafed him sorely at first, but little by little with the help of Cellino he came to see that it was these very laws which had been the sole barrier between Orensē and a complete barbarism that might have justified any over-lord in sweeping away the little state with its semi-independence and stiff pride into the limbo of forgotten things. He learned that the laws were just and well administered, the customs of practical value and the traditions a fence against a dangerous liberty.

To be transported from the prosaic atmosphere of England of those days where the romantic school had not yet overthrown the cold artificial age of reason and logic into this very hot-bed of romanticism required the quintessence of adaptability, and Carfax was not by nature adaptable. Happily he preserved a sufficiently well balanced reason to recognize the existence of forces whose effect on himself might be negligible.

III

The boys were of such utterly different character that

Carfax seems to have found great difficulty in awarding just punishments, as what was suitable in one case would prove totally inefficient in the other. His diary is full of details of such struggles. But one attempt brought about a revelation which is not without bearing in Prince Paul's future and is therefore worth recording here.

Raphael had gone out with his mother and Paul chose that afternoon to be particularly unruly. In the end Carfax decided to try the effect of solitary confinement and imprisoned him in a small room on the ground floor of the tower where their apartments were and which was used for the storing of such sporting implements as were not in use. It was lighted merely by a small grating high up, and at that season was nearly empty.

Having thus secured a little respite to himself, Carfax took a book and enjoyed his ease till dusk had settled to dark. He did not think it would hurt Paul to meditate on his sins till supper-time. Presently Raphael returned. Carfax heard him run up to Paul's room, calling his brother, and he went out to him in the passage.

"You can't see Paul," he said quickly. "I've put him in solitary confinement till supper-time."

In the meagre light of the passage lamp, Carfax saw Raphael's face change.

"Where have you put him? He's not in his room?" he said sharply.

Carfax prepared to withdraw with cold disapproval but the boy sprang forward.

"He's not anywhere where he's not got a light?" he cried with sudden fear. "You can't do that with Paul, you know —leave him without a light."

Carfax prepared to close the door and was prevented.

"You don't understand, sir," said Raphael, making desperate efforts to speak respectfully as the quickest way to

get his ends. "Paul is never left in the dark. It's—it—he can't help it. It's because of my mother and the caves. You must give him a light at once. Where is he? Be quick!"

Carfax still hesitated. There was no disputing the boy's agitation, but it sounded a preposterous story. However, the mention of the Princess decided him. He felt sure even Raphael would not make jokes about his mother.

"Paul is in the sports room," he began, but Raphael rushed off.

He heard him clatter down the stairs and followed more slowly. Raphael was shaking the door and calling out:

"Paul, Paul! It's all right, we are bringing a light. Don't be a silly." Then over his shoulder to Carfax, "Open the door, quick!"

Carfax did so, his face rather grim and angry. Raphael rushed in and flung himself down beside the prostrate figure of his brother. Carfax unhooked the little lamp that hung on the wall outside, and went in. Raphael was talking to his brother as he might have talked to a baby, half scolding him and half coaxing him.

"Why didn't you tell him?" Carfax heard him whisper; "He's a beast, of course, but he didn't know! It wasn't really very dark, was it?"

Paul sat up suddenly and leaned against the wall. His face looked white and strained, and was covered with perspiration. He looked at Carfax through the uncertain light of the little lamp and smiled crookedly:

"Sorry I'm such an idiot, sir," he said ruefully, "but I always hope I won't be. It's such a beastly stupid thing to be afraid of the dark!"

"It isn't your fault," began Raphael, but Carfax interrupted him. He took them both to his room, gave Paul

some brandy, for he was still shaking, and sent Raphael away, much against that young gentleman's will.

"Now," said Carfax, in a friendly tone, "are you going to tell me about it yourself, or would you rather I asked someone else?"

"No, don't ask anyone," Paul spoke hurriedly. "It might get round to her—I'd rather tell you. You've never been to the caves of Monastro yet, have you? We don't often go. They are right up in Monte Argon, and they go miles and miles, a sort of labyrinth of passages. All the same it's a beautiful bit of country outside, and the air is supposed to be very good; and one day before I was born, my father took my mother up there, because she had been sleeping badly. There was a forester's hut there, where one could stay. One day he went after a boar and left her alone, and she wandered into the caves—and she—got lost." He faltered a moment and then went on more hurriedly: "Of course, they found her all right in the end, and she was awfully brave over it and seemed to forget it, but just before I was born the fear of it came back to her, and so—somehow it seems to have got into me. Even as a baby they say I screamed in the dark. As long as there's a bit of light—even a star—it's all right, but when there's nothing—" Again he stopped and mopped his face with his handkerchief. "It's awfully stupid. I'm always hoping I've grown out of it, but apparently I've not."

"It was hardly fair to me, not to have told me," said Carfax quietly.

"I suppose I should—but I'm not particularly proud of it. You can put me in prison if you like so long as I have a light; it's beastly enough even then."

He rose and stood waiting a moment. Carfax wondered if he were going to apologize for his original behavior but he only added nervously:

"We never say anything to remind my mother of the caves. She doesn't mind darkness."

"I understand," returned Carfax gravely. "You shall have a light next time. Good night!"

III

In the end Carfax gained the confidence and friendship for which he fought very completely and a handsome acknowledgement of the fact from his autocratic young charges.

We will give the incident straight from his diary.

"July 5th.

"Today has been one of adventures! Happily with no worse result than a sprained wrist for Paul and a stiff shoulder for me. It was a half Monday and we set out to climb the nearest ridge of Mount Argon.

"On our return journey our track crossed the face of a steep grassy slope that overhung a deep gorge. I was leading, Paul in the middle and Raphael behind. It is only by grace of my Alpine experiences that I am permitted to lead, for the boys are careful and expert climbers as a rule, especially Paul. As we crossed the slope, one or the other of them shouted something to me and I, with unpardonable carelessness, half turned, slipped and slithered down the slope, jerking Paul off his feet. By a miracle of instinct Raphael sprang behind a jutting-out rock and thus set the strain on the rope on something more substantial than his slim self.

"It was an unpleasant situation and in the amazing silence of the mountain side it seemed hours rather than moments while I figured it out.

"I had slipped to the very edge of the slope and was half hanging over the lip; a small heather bush had checked my slide. Paul, above me, was practically spread-eagled out on

his back with the rope pinning down his right arm. Raphael, still on the track, was bracing himself against the rock, and the rock and he had to hold the dead weight of two men, for Paul weighs every bit as much as I do.

"The question resolved itself into the problem as to whether Paul could free himself from the rope and climb up again. I found we were discussing this coolly when the possibility was shattered by Paul saying quietly, 'My left wrist's sprained or broken; I can't use it at all.'

"I made an effort to move myself, but only succeeded in dragging Paul a foot lower and cutting into his arm with the rope. So for another moment that was of hours' duration, we hung there. Then Raphael said in an expressionless voice: 'The rope is fraying!'

"That settled it. There was only one possible thing to do. I got out my knife and began cutting the rope between Paul and myself. He could not see me, being on his back, and Raphael, who could, had the sense to hold his tongue. However I had to warn Paul at the last in case the sudden release from my weight dislodged him further. He shouted a frenzied command at me not to be a fool, that he'd make another effort, but Raphael's eyes were on the rope where it crossed the rock and he said, 'If you move all three of us will go.' My knife settled the matter. I slipped over the edge, grasped the heather bush, which held my weight for a moment, and then as I fell I saw below me, not the narrow, deep gorge, but a little plateau of grass overhung by the lip of the steep slope above. The margin was very narrow but enough. I pitched on to my shoulder, nearly rolled over the edge and then sat up and shouted.

"I soon scrambled to a position where I could see the boys. Free from the strain of the rope, Paul had turned on his face and lay there quite still, in spite of the clear and emphatic directions hurled at him from Raphael. I added my advice

and presently he responded and climbed back with some difficulty. I had at last the satisfaction of seeing them both standing on the track and Raphael tying up his brother's wrist with a grimy handkerchief. It was less pleasant to watch them finish the crossing of the slope, but that once accomplished I myself proceeded on the downward way according to directions given me by Raphael. At length the character of the gorge altered and we were able, after a stiff climb, to join forces again. None of us had much to say; my shoulder was extremely uncomfortable and I've little doubt Paul's wrist was the same. He said when we reached the Castle that he would get old Martin, the head ranger, to do it up, Martin being the general surgeon for small mishaps. Then he stopped and held out his hand to me: 'I sha'n't forget,' he said rather unsteadily and went off, Raphael following. I went in to report the matter to the Prince before an exaggerated version got to his ears. He was exceedingly matter of fact about it.

"In the evening, however, when I too had recourse to Martin to get my shoulder seen to, I had more to contend with. One would have thought I had saved the life of every forester's son at the expense of my own!

"July 6th.

"The sequel to our mountain adventure is curious. I was returning from a visit to Cellino today when, on reaching the entrance steps, I found my two boys waiting for me and Raphael carried in his hand a silver salver.

"Paul came forward slowly and with some embarrassment.

" 'Mr. Carfax,' he said. 'You were never offered The Service when you came. Raphael and I would like to make that good now, if you'll accept it.'

"I was puzzled but I said I would accept anything they wished.

"Paul took the silver dish from his brother. There was

a small piece of bread and some salt on it, and he offered it to me with these words:

" 'To the Guest of the House, be the protection of the House, by all the House! See you to that!'

"The last words were addressed to Raphael with a gesture of command which the other acknowledged.

"I ate the bread and salt as directed and Raphael disappeared with the salver.

"Paul and I looked at each other.

" 'Can I have an explanation?' I asked.

" 'You ought to have received it when you came sir, as is the custom,' he said getting rather red, 'but my father was away and we didn't know what you would be like and—and it tied our hands you see,—so——'

" 'And they are tied now?' I asked.

"A pause.

" 'You tied them yesterday—forever,' he said slowly and gravely. I glimpsed behind the boy, struggling with a difficult situation, the man who would always rise to the occasion, and I knew there would have been no other possible thing to be done yesterday by any man. Paul has the future before him."

Carfax having won the full confidence of his pupils, set to work to make his prognostications of Paul's future good. Here he was ably backed by the Princess. The two seem to have made a silent compact and bent all their powers to building a causeway for the ambitious feet they sought to guide.

CHAPTER III

PROPHETIC DAYS

I

DURING Carfax's first year at Arenzano he did not return to England but stayed the round of the months at the Castle and apparently found no satiety in the life.

One holiday, however, he went to Cardozza with the Prince and there discovered that the hereditary vice of the family at which Prince d'Arenzano had hinted at their first meeting was true enough. The d'Arenzanos were all born gamblers and Victor d'Arenzano might easily have headed the list for reckless play, but for the restraining influence of his wife. There were times, however, when she found her power weakening and, rather than strain the leash, she would then leave him free for the moment to follow his mood and to indulge in a bout of play that was the cause of much rejoicing in the gay circles of Cardozza society.

"My boys ought never to touch a card," he told Carfax one evening. "Indeed they are supposed not to. I thrash them well if I find them at it, but they'll play all the same when they grow up. Raphael will keep hold of himself perhaps, but Paul will be like myself, keep out of it for months

and then gamble with the cinders in hell rather than with nothing!"

He began stuffing a prodigious quantity of gold and notes into his pockets. Carfax watched him curiously.

"That's a fair provision," he remarked.

"Ah, that's our saving tradition! We can only play for cash down. It's a beastly nuisance but there it is!"

"Then there is something stronger than the cards!" Carfax remarked with a smile.

Again the Prince laughed and shook his head.

"I don't know how that is but Cellino will tell you—'Play and don't pay, it's the end of your day.' That's the old tag. It sounds silly enough but a d'Arenzano will wake his banker up at five in the morning to provide cash rather than leave the table with the money unpaid. No doubt that's what has saved us from ruin."

Carfax understood better than ever the cordiality of Prince d'Arenzano's reception by Cardozza society!

Beyond this visit and an extended riding tour through the little Orensē Principality, Carfax seems to have been stationary at Arenzano.

The two younger boys at this time were instructed by one of the Benedictine fathers, though Carfax taught them English and exercised control over their free hours. Sylvestro was young in age but large in size, a charming, irresponsible creature, beloved by all; always in trouble and always sliding out of it with ingratiating penitence, that, it must be feared, was only skin deep! Damien with his quick temper seems to have been the champion of the oppressed of lost causes and all that was old, ugly or unloved, betraying no emotion on his own account unless his own tenets of honor or responsibilities were concerned. Injustice goaded him to madness but he made a nice distinction between the injustice

arising from a divergent standard of conduct and the crude injustice of hasty judgment.

II

During his third year Carfax records an episode which proves that Arenzano had not exhausted its powers of springing new surprises on him out of its storehouse of legendary law and custom.

He writes as follows:

"Mediævalism gone mad! When shall I get to an end of it all? I'd heard vaguely of something called 'The Command', some form of words which when used by the reigning prince, become more than an order, disobedience to them counting as high treason.

"The Prince was in an unusually bad humor today, I suspect that a visit to Cardozza is in contemplation. We avoided him as far as possible, but coming through a lobby on our way out this afternoon we met him. Paul was ahead of Raphael and myself and stood aside to allow his father to pass. The Prince turned sharply on him and accidentally knocked over a large vase of great value which broke in pieces. The usually courteous Prince flared up.

" 'Pick it up,' he said in tones so aggressive that I was not surprised to see Paul jerk back his head with a black look in his eyes that I know well.

" 'I'll call Peter,' he answered shortly.

"The Prince interposed swiftly between him and the door. He had clearly lost all control over himself and it looked as if Paul was following suit.

"Neither Raphael nor I dared intervene for fear of precipitating matters.

" 'Pick it up yourself,' insisted the Prince.

" 'It's not my work or my fault sir,' retorted Paul.

"The Prince went first white then scarlet and said:

" 'Pick up the pieces—It is a Command!'

"He gave a certain gesture with his left hand.

"Raphael caught my arm. Paul stood looking grimly at his father. They were sufficiently near each other in height to make one forget it was a boy and a man. Then Paul said quietly.

" 'It is work for a servant. I will call one.'

"He turned and went out of another door, without hastening his steps.

"Raphael dragged me back through the door by which we had entered, evidently hoping to intercept Paul, but when we reached the court there was no sign of him.

"I thought he had done wisely to disappear, for although he had no right to disobey his father I could not but sympathize, for it seemed to me he had been commanded in a very uncalled for manner.

"Raphael looked round with apprehensive eyes. I was amazed to see him quite agitated.

" 'He must have gone to Cellino's,' he muttered, 'Oh, how could he be such a fool!'

"I arrested his hurrying steps.

" 'Is this a game, Raphael?' I demanded.

"He angrily shook off my hand.

" 'A game! Good Heavens, don't you understand? He's disobeyed the Command!'

"We went on to the gate house where Cellino, who is at once the Recorder and Teacher of the Law, lives, and I pressed the boy for further explanation as we went, though he is not a person one would go to for explanation as a rule.

" 'When the Prince gives the Command, its *got* to be obeyed,' he said shortly, 'or it counts as treason. It's supposed to be given only in urgent necessity. It was unjustifiable—given like that. Paul must lodge an appeal.'

"Raphael flung these scraps of information at me over his shoulder.

"Cellino had seen nothing of Paul and his face was as troubled as Raphael's when the latter jerked out his story.

" 'Find him if you can,' he said. 'I don't know what to advise. An appeal's a serious matter.'

" 'It's a serious affair for Paul if he doesn't,' retorted Raphael and flung himself away down the stairs.

"Cellino explained matters more fully to me.

"Paul would not only have to apologize formally and by prescribed ceremony in Court but would have to endure an hour's pillory. I had seen this pillory of course. An odd iron erection with a heavy figure of the Wolf of Arenzano on the top. I could not imagine Paul submitting to such an indignity.

" 'It was obviously unfair to Command him on such a trivial matter,' I remarked.

"Cellino's face grew more gloomy still.

" 'He must appeal before sundown, and a Court is then summoned to decide whether it is an unrighteous Command or not. If it is, then it is His Highness who apologizes—and it tells against him when his sword is carried for the last time, in there'—he nodded to the Great Gallery where the records and armor of the past Princes are garnered.

"Cellino left me and I returned here to my room.

"The next day.

"Paul did not turn up last night till quite late. He was very silent and morose and would make no answer to Raphael's passionate arguments. He said he was not going to appeal. Raphael at last, flung off in a temper.

"Paul lingered a minute when he said good night.

" 'I've seen Cellino,' he said slowly. 'He understands. You see it would be entered in the records against His Highness. His sword would not be bare.'

"If I fail to grasp the meaning of all these absurd sentiments and proceedings I can at least see that Paul is doing something which Cellino regards as heroic and Raphael as madly quixotic. I wonder what his mother thinks?

"The next day. The Princess waylaid me as we returned from supper last night. She was plainly agitated and I even fancied there were traces of tears on her face. She said with a little catch in her voice:

" 'Paul is being very good but it's dreadfully unfair. What can I do however?'

"It would have been impertinence on my part to offer consolation. I merely remarked I thought Paul capable of deciding on his actions.

"She still hesitated and finally said:

" 'Raphael will not be of much use to Paul—or anyone else tomorrow, Mr. Carfax. If he is too upset to keep proper hours you will understand?'

"I assured her I should not be surprised if he played truant the following day.

"It was an amazingly disconcerting ceremony. I think it time such formalities were banished from the Statute Book, though it's rank treason to hint as much. The Justice Hall was empty of all save officials, though it's the essence of the Law that all may attend. The Prince himself was far more distressed than Paul. Probably it's not the first time his quick temper has got him into trouble. The culprit was formally charged with disobeying The Command and formally acknowledged his fault, accepting the penalty, which was one hour in the pillory. That instrument is so framed that once in its clutches a man is kept kneeling with head and shoulders bent beneath the weight of the iron wolf that crowns it. It is the length of time rather than the position that insures the hardship, but of course there is the public indignity. In this matter poor Paul was spared much, for

the usually busy yard was deserted and only those bound to be present were there. Nevertheless the sun beat down pitilessly on the bare stones and for the one scalding hour Paul had to kneel there. I was too sick and exasperated to endure the scene. The Prince disappeared directly the formalities in the hall were over, and I do not know what happened to Paul when he was released, but he came in with Raphael about nine o'clock, very silent, and with an obvious headache but making a great effort to appear as usual.

"Friday. Today about ten o'clock Paul's lessons were interrupted. He was to ride to Melino with his father. They started off in the best of spirits, both quite cheerful, and Paul triumphant that legitimate business should over-ride the meaner claims of the schoolroom! Raphael, on the contrary, will not yet speak to his father."

III

Paul's violent temper, to which Carfax alludes in the foregoing extract, was indeed a source of vast concern and difficulty to Carfax, and many pages of his diary are devoted to his strenuous efforts to help his pupil to self-control and shame of what had hitherto been regarded as an unfortunate 'heritage' against which it was useless to struggle. Space will not permit of us giving details of the long fight they both put up, but Carfax may be credited with a fair measure of success since there is no record of any serious trouble until in the zenith of his days black wrath swept over the Prince and the full hurricane of his long suppressed passion broke and left an indelible wound and scar across his life.

IV

After Carfax had been at Arenzano three years, it was

decided that Paul should go to the University at Cardozza, and Raphael join him there the following year. Whether Carfax was then to leave or continue in charge of the younger boys is not clear. Events proved too momentous for any pre-arranged plan. Once Paul was launched Carfax gave him his whole attention and his liking and mistrust of the boy grew side by side.

Count Raphael at this age seems to have had a peculiar fascination. There was something impish and unexpected about him. He was capable of devotion and a vast unselfishness when his affections were engaged. He lacked, however, any power of openly expressing his real feelings and had a perverse habit of misleading those about him when his feelings were in any degree moved, by a display of callous indifference. With a most complete understanding of the course he ought to take he frequently betrayed a deliberate pleasure in taking the wrong one. But the trait which seems to have given Carfax the most uneasiness was that streak of cruelty which was ingrained in him and the inhuman patience with which he would wait his opportunity to get 'level' with a fancied wrong.

Probably Carfax discussed these matters with the Princess but she could do little. Raphael was undoubtedly her favorite son. Her pride in her eldest born had its complement in her sense of Raphael's need of her affection and trust. Indeed he seems to have invariably shown his best side to his mother, and she, if heaven and time had permitted, might have been some check on his disastrous career.

There is practically no record of Prince Paul's early days at the University beyond that supplied by the University books. He did well from the first, his shrewd judgment and power of self-restraint held in leash his fast developing powers of leading, and to have weighed and studied and watched the new world round him.

The following year Raphael joined him, not without grave misgivings on the part of Carfax, we find.

These misgivings were only too well founded, for after one brilliant year in which he showed promise of exceptional ability he came hopelessly to grief.

There is no occasion to go into the matter which closed his University career. It was sufficiently serious to lead to his temporary banishment from his home as well as Cardozza and the problem of what to do with him seems to have been acute. In the end Carfax came to the rescue and he and the young count set out on a European tour as a means of completing the young man's education and keeping him under the eye of a true and devoted companion.

CHAPTER IV

TRAGEDY AND CEREMONY

I

SOMEWHERE in those unseen regions of causation which shut in humanity with mountainous walls, the clouds of tragedy were gathering themselves together, though their very gathering was preluded by an unexpected event.

Princess d'Arenzano, after many years, was again about to become a mother.

It was not surprising that under these circumstances she made less effort than usual to retain Prince Victor at her side when an uncontrollable thirst for excitement demanded recognition. He went up to Cardozza and descended with much gaiety and enthusiasm on Paul, whom he insited on carrying off from his studies to bear him company for a few days in the Orensē Palace.

"You've got to know people," he said, "and though, I want a fling, I do not want to go too far,—you know how it is with your mother—if you are at hand I'll know when to stop, but you are not to play yourself,—not my sort of play."

Prince Victor always frankly recognized his own weakness and expected others to do the same. Paul appreciated

the situation, and for some few evenings they both went out together continually, the Prince pleased enough to introduce his son to Society.

Then came the evening when the clouds gathered and broke, and altered all the fortunes of the House of Arenzano.

Paul was playing a comparatively mild game at one table, but at another, near by, play ran high. On a sudden, a sharp exclamation, a chair pushed back, and an accusation hurled cross the table.

Then a moment's silence, the whole room holding its breath. Paul got up suddenly, and crossed the room, leaving a little pile of money beside his scattered cards.

Voices rose rapidly again. Quickly and fiercely the dispute was tossed from side to side. Prince Victor and another man faced each other. The former angry and indignant, the latter quiet, furious and desperate, while between them sat a bewildered youth vaguely conscious that someone had been accused of cheating him, that the air was full of danger, and that these men he called friends were splitting up into two parties: one round the desperate Gibelli, against whom he had been matching his poor wits, and the other around the indignant Prince, who, without warning, had burst out in his defence, declaring that Gibelli was cheating.

Paul pushed his way to his father's side.

"Name your man and go," he heard one saying.

"He will choose pistols," muttered another.

Paul caught his father's arm.

"Sir," he whispered swiftly, "you can't fight now, you must put it off. Remember there's my mother."

Prince d'Arenzano, till then hot with excitment, certain of the righteousness of his cause, turned as white as Paul himself.

But those who had not heard the whisper—and some who

had—tried to push Paul aside. They could not understand what had come over the Prince.

It was Orsena, who intervened.

"Take him away, my Prince," he said quickly to Paul, "I'll settle all this and come to you."

Somehow or other Paul got his father from the place and out into the streets. The cold night air was grateful to them both. It was about 2 a. m. and the stars twinkled down kindly on the city, which was, at last, extinguishing its puny lights.

II

"He will not consider any delay," said Orsena gravely, "though it has cost him half his supporters. You need not fear that your honor is touched by the request though. The support of all those who count is with you."

"Then to-morrow holds good; six o'clock?"

The Prince betrayed nothing of his feelings, but his son, standing behind him, clenched his hands.

The indefatigable Orsena had been to and fro between the contending parties the whole day.

The circumstances regarding Princess d'Arenzano were well known, and at Paul's passionate urging, an attempt was made to postpone the meeting till after the event, but Gibelli was inflexible. A meeting next morning at six o'clock, pistols for weapons, two shots to be exchanged, was his demand, and he would not abate one iota of it.

Orsena insisted on the Prince getting a few hours' sleep, and also made Paul lie down, but though the father slept like a child, the son neither slept nor closed his eyes. It was his first direct encounter with this desperate remedy for cooling the passions of men, and a cold horror filled him. It appealed neither to his reason nor his heart. If his

father were right, and he insisted he was, in saying that Gibelli was cheating the young Francavanchi, then Gibelli was no fit man for his father to meet. The Prince could bring no proof to his word or conviction, and Gibelli coolly and emphatically denied it; naturally he would do so, Paul thought. If his father killed him they would be no nearer the truth, if he—but Paul refused to face the alternative.

Paul was no child; in many ways he was old for his years, and he was well aware that his mother's life might well be in jeopardy with his father's. He had even suggested to Orsena the possibility of taking his father's place, but Orsena, after serious consideration, would not permit this.

"We have done all we can," he said gravely, "the fellow is a brute-beast or he would postpone the meeting."

After this Paul never left his father's side. He helped him dress and saw that he had food. The Prince was quiet and composed, but very unlike his ordinary gay self.

"I think, somehow, it will go badly with me, Paul," he said a little wistfully, "I was a fool, but I couldn't see that boy cheated. You will make a better Seigneur than I have if it comes to that. I hope it will be a girl for her sake. Girls are always scarce in our family."

Terrible minutes—the precursor of many such agonizing spaces of time,—for the younger man with his emotional nature yet fresh to such experience. It required all his young strength to sustain him, and the Prince himself seemed to have looked to him for support.

The meeting was in the great Park behind the Palace. Orsena, Francavanchi himself, the Duke de Florence and Count Baltazza were present, besides Paul, whom no urging could keep away. Gibelli was supported by Prince Felara and Count Bienvento, a notorious duellist, neither of them names to inspire confidence.

It was a quick affair. Prince d'Arenzano fell mortally wounded at the first shot, his own just grazing Gibelli's hand. Paul rushed forward as his father fell, but it was Orsena who caught him in his arms.

The Prince opened his eyes once, and smiled at his son, turned his head with a little sigh towards him, and died.

Paul got up and looked around him silently. The little circle of agitated men gathered closer, shutting out the small group of three across the open space. No one spoke for a moment. Orsena was weeping.

A fitful gleam of sunlight filtered through the trees, and warmed the greyness of the dawn.

The other group, seeing the suddenly doffed hats, removed their own, but when Gibelli would have stepped forward, the others restrained him.

"Keep away, the son is there," muttered one, and Gibelli paused, and then turned and went. It was his second who advanced to make the proper speeches, and he also failed and left them unsaid before the tall, silent young man still standing there, bareheaded, intent—Was he registering a vow of vengeance Baltazza wondered?

But Paul, on the contrary, was swearing on his father's dead form, that never should any circumstance force him into this extremity, this barbarous cruelty of a duel, a vow he broke once, and once only, to his everlasting sorrow.

III

Orsena has left it on record that, from the first moment, this boy of nineteen dominated the situation, gave his quiet orders, and then leaving him—Orsena—in charge, set off in the afternoon, on the best horse his father had brought with him, to ride back to Arenzano with the terrible news.

He himself told his mother—with what care and tender-

ness was possible—but the shock was too great for her. Twenty-four hours after, a fifth son to the House of Arenzano was born before his time, and the Princess was passing into the land of shadows.

Paul hardly left her. She signed for them to put the tiny baby into its big brother's arms. It had just been baptized Maximilian Everard and had been wailing feebly but was quiet now, lying in that firm, close hold.

"You will look after him Paul, darling," whispered the Princess, "as your own son?"

"As my son will I care for him," said Paul in his grave voice.

Her mind wandered a little—into the future maybe—

"The greatest Seigneur of them all—'wider worlds'—" and then suddenly and clearly:

"Tell Raphael we loved him all the same—be good to him, Paul, he needs love."

And then no more.

In forty-eight hours Paul Landuoc d'Arenzano had lost both mother and father and from mere responsibility for his own soul, had stepped through black portals of grief, to the absolute authority and rule over some twenty thousand souls, including those of his four brothers.

IV

One of the first things Prince Paul had done when he reached Arenzano had been to dispatch a courier to Rome where, at that particular moment, Carfax and Raphael were staying.

They set off homeward within an hour, and travelled with all possible speed. They arrived too late to see her—a misfortune which had the worst effect on Count Raphael.

Carfax left on record a simple account of the home-

coming, which reads rather like that of one forcing himself to record impersonally an event which had laid cold fingers on his heart.

"We had ridden hard and were cruelly weary, but when the Castle came in sight with its lowered flag and the stormy evening light behind it, the foreboding in my heart spoke so loudly that I would gladly have begun the journey again to hold hope for my companion for an hour longer, for though none spoke to us as they took our horses and Raphael questioned none, the double shadow of death hung heavy over us.

"We were asked to wait in the little room which had always been Prince d'Arenzano's.

"His Highness should be informed at once.

"It startled me, that 'His Highness,' and it required an effort of my numbed brain to connect it with Paul.

"Raphael had spoken no word for hours. I expected him to rush off searching for his brother himself, but he stood motionless there in the dim room before the wood fire, with an expressionless face.

"Then the door opened and Paul came in, a new Paul, older, taller, black clad, and, it seemed, a face on which sorrow had set an indefaceable seal.

"He held out his hand to me very quietly but said nothing, and looked at Raphael, who half turned aside. Then he put his arm round his brother's shoulders and took him away. I knew my two 'boys' had gone from me forever."

The double funeral was a vast ceremonious affair.

Through the trying time Raphael sought refuge in the forest, dragging himself back for food, or shelter at night, speaking to no one if avoidable, savage, bitter, and nursing a cold vindictive hate of the Power that had snatched his mother from him.

Paul secretly feared his bitterness would declare itself against the puny, frail babe, who still lived in spite of the

forebodings. It was two days before Raphael would see it. Then Paul, paying one of his frequent visits to his youngest charge, saw Raphael standing by the old nurse of their infancy, looking down at the baby. His face was less hard, and the old nurse had laid her hand on his arm unrebuked. Paul withdrew quietly.

Terrible days those for nineteen years to face and marshal into order, yet he did it—Cellino by his side—shirking no duty, forgetting no call, rising as he ever did to the full force of his Power in the face of difficulties. Cellino's official records of the time contain nothing but cold facts, but in his voluminous diaries are pages of details, and expressions of admiration and devotion to the young Prince, "who shirks or forgets nothing, and goes from one duty to another quietly and without complaint." "Yet there were weaker hours too,"—a tiny record, half erased—or written as by one half ashamed to put it down—of a night watch in the chapel and bitter weeping, from which Heaven, it may be, sent consolation and new strength.

It was all over at last.

The guests had gone, and the great Castle prepared itself for a new rule. For one year the new Prince must perform his duties in the eyes of a critical State, must administer the law, and dispense justice as one on probation, and then would come the coronation, the formal acceptance of him by a people who, in long past years, had won such a right from the feudal lords, and still hung tenaciously to the form.

Carfax stayed on a while in charge of the younger boys, but, after a few months, it became clear that he could ill adjust himself to the changed conditions.

Paul had evidently no intention of giving him the undisputed sway over his brothers that Carfax had had over his original pupils and there is much to be said on the young man's side. He was faced with a difficult task and he saw,

perhaps more clearly than Carfax, the immense importance of establishing his own authority over that turbulent young life. So, though there was no outward friction, Carfax decided it was wiser to retire before his deep friendship with them should suffer even the shadow of eclipse. They parted with mutual regret and undimmed affection.

Carfax could not face the idea of less absorbing pupils. He had become possessed of a small independence on the death of his god-father, Sir Antony Rushford. This enabled him to gratify his thirst for travel and to turn his attention to the literary career he had long desired.

He returned to Arenzano for the coronation of Prince Paul and left a detailed and interesting account of the affair.

V

THE CORONATION OF PRINCE D'ARENZANO AS RELATED BY HENRY CARFAX

* * * * "I was met at Forresti by Damien and was a little surprised and touched at his warm greeting.

"Raphael received me at the Castle and apologized for not being at the Inn.

" 'Cellino and I can't call our souls our own,' he said laughing. 'It's the deuce of a business getting crowned!'

"There was no sign of Paul, nor did I see Sylvestro till he rushed in late as usual for a meal and overwhelmed me with welcome. I asked if Paul were not visible till the great day and Raphael said, after a shade of hesitation:

" 'Well, he's not visible as present.'

" 'He's at confession,' blurted out Sylvestro with his usual appalling frankness, 'and he has to keep fast and vigil all night.'

"Raphael peremptorily shut him up.

"Later in the evening Raphael asked me if I'd come and see Paul, who might not leave the chapel but wanted a glimpse of me.

"As we went, Raphael explained that a remote ancestor had been murdered the night before his 'Crowning' and involved his successors in endless trouble. Since then the night before the ceremony is spent in sanctuary and vigil.

"Paul came to us at once down the dim aisle.

"He said Raphael would have to look after me but that he hoped I'd remember everybody and everything was at my service.

"I could not see him very clearly in the faint light. His voice was rather suppressed but as beautiful as ever and I could feel he was at high tension.

" 'You are not to talk, you are to feed,' commanded Raphael.

"He had brought his brother a tray with some odd flat biscuits and a silver cup of wine. 'That's all he's allowed,' he grumbled. 'I call it asking for a catastrophy tomorrow!'

"We did not stay long, and as we were going, Paul said to me, 'It's not the fault of tradition if we do not take our part seriously.' Then he went back to the steps before the High Altar, and I saw him kneel again in the shadow.

"Each time I woke in the night I found myself thinking of him. I was told to be in the Hall at five-thirty next morning. There was a fair gathering assembled there when I entered. Sylvestro and Damien were in a dress of ceremony I had never seen before, odd, and bizarre to English eyes, but decidedly becoming. They were both in a state of suppressed excitement. Count Orsena was there, and others I knew. There was a subdued air of expectancy, but the cold morning light seemed to lay a spell upon us. We spoke low with one eye on the stairs.

"Then he came.

"I can see the two of them now, coming down in the clear morning light. Paul—my Paul no longer—with his grave young face, and that sense of dignity which is a part of him now, in the public mind, and was then new. He wore a purple dress, made after the fashion of his hunting suit, but with a loose jacket slung over his shoulders, and he carried a fur cap in his hand. Raphael came behind him and his whole attention was focused on his brother. Paul only bowed to us very gravely and we all went into the Chapel It was a blaze of light just now. It was High Mass and the Cardinal, whom I had not seen over night, officiated. Paul sat alone in a special seat.

"Then back to the Hall for a most needed meal, Paul being, at last, permitted to eat! Raphael hardly moved from his side. I learned after, that, though they had both learned all the ceremonials, Raphael had undertaken to prompt Paul, and Cellino to manage all the rest.

"The big courtyard was transformed. There were four tiers of seats round it; the windows were reserved for ladies and children. The boys and I watched the throng assemble: the great vassals and their families, representatives from every town and village, from every trade or profession; near the centre, were the foresters in their picturesque dress. Round the dais at the east end of the court were the personal friends and servants and on the dais with Paul would be the Cardinal, the King's Representative, his brothers, Cellino, Father Pierre, and,—to my surprise,—myself.

"Presently we had to take our place. From the dais we could not see the 'Gate' ceremony, but I was told of it. Paul and his supporter rode up to the locked doors, and knocked. Cellino demanded names and rights, which Raphael gave. The keys were then handed to Paul to touch and then he gave

them to Raphael, who unlocked the gate. They then rode up to the dais and dismounted, and Paul took his place.

"The herald made a Proclamation, and then Paul made his first official speech:

" 'I, Paul Landuoc, eldest son of Victor d'Arenzano, now dead, do here claim by right of my birth, and heritage, the kingdom of my fathers, and the Dukedom of Melino and, that peace may not afterwards be troubled, I here challenge such as would dispute my just claim and rights to speak openly their mind and do battle with my champion, or hold peace forever!'

"Then he turned to Raphael, 'I appoint my brother, Raphael d'Arenzano, champion and supporter of my claim.'

"Then for five long, silent minutes we sat still and motionless.

"Paul stood looking down. It was extraordinarily impressive, that silent waiting for a catastrophe that never came. Then Paul spoke again:

" 'Since none challenge my rights, I ask you, my people, present here whether you will accept me as your ruler and give me your loyal and true service? I, for my part, promising to serve you faithfully, gently and mercifully, to cherish and guard you according to the laws and customs of my fathers. And I ask the Holy Church,' (he turned to the Cardinal) 'if I be acceptable to Her in the office of Governor? Will She, on her part, bestow on me approval and blessing, I undertaking to remain her faithful son, obedient to her law, and maintaining the same in my kingdom, and of my sovereign Lord, The King,' (he turned to the King's Representative), 'I ask if he accept the choice of my people and will uphold my cause against my enemies, I, for my part, promising to serve him as my overlord with faithful service in all honorable and lawful purposes.'

"Then he stopped and faced the people again, and held out his right hand.

" 'I, Paul Landuoc, await your decision.'

"I never heard anything equal to the sound that went up like thunder. Shut in by the great walls of the Castle, the voices vibrated and shook the place, rose and fell. A thousand upstretched hands and faces fronted Paul. I saw his face quiver for a moment, and he drew breath deeply. Raphael never once took his eyes from him. Then quiet fell, and he said simply:

" 'Thank you, my people,' and it seemed to come straight from his heart.

"Then Cellino brought out the Book of the House, with the oath written in it, and held it open, and Paul put one hand on it, and raised the other and took the oath. Every word of it could be heard at the other end of the court. I can hear the echo now, of the deep passionate tones that stirred one so strangely. . . . 'this will I keep until my dying day, on peril to my immortal soul, in the name of the Blessed Trinity.'

"There was no cheering here, but all heads were bare. Then he knelt to the Cardinal and took an oath of allegiance to the Church, then to the King's Representative, and took oath there, and so having satisfied all men of his good intent, he was conducted to the Chapel, where the Belt of the Seigneurship, the Cross of St. Paul, the Mantle of Jurisdiction, and the Sword of Justice were given him in solemn service. Raphael clasped on his belt and led him back to the waiting people.

"Then Count Orsena (not the Church be it noted) handed him the dull gold circlet, which is the crown of Orensē, and he took it and held it up in their sight, and set it on his own head. The cry that went up was shattering if one were not sharing in it.

"Then silence settled down again, and I saw in the doorway behind me the old nurse with the baby Max in her arms.

"Then came the homage giving. Sylvestro and Damien stood together, and Raphael first knelt and put his hands in Paul's and swore to give faithful, true, and obedient service to his liege Lord and Seigneur, to hold his honor as his own, and to lay his life at his command. The others followed. Sylvestro's voice was unsteady, Damien's steady but not very audible. Raphael reappeared carrying Max, which Paul apparently had not expected, nor had the crowd. Raphael put the baby's hands in Paul's and repeated the oath for him. Max evidently thought it a game for when Paul bent down and kissed him quite naturally, the baby clutched the gleaming cross, which he had to unclasp from its tiny fingers. I don't think I am a sentimental man, but I felt quite affected.

"Cellino and the officials then took oath, then the chief of the vassals. The ceremony here was finely gradated. Paul advanced three steps to meet Orsena, and was evidently moved when the grey haired old man, who had been his father's friend, knelt to the boy he had nursed as a baby. One vassal was a lady, and she enjoyed her few minutes of publicity more than Paul did, I think, though he showed no embarrassment.

"Then the head forester came in the name of all. He carried a bunch of leaves, one from every variety of tree in the forest, and his oath ended with these words:

" 'And of the forest, of the trees of the forest, of the life of the forest my Sovereign Lord may take tithe and toll, none gainsaying him.'

"Paul touched the leaves, and Raphael laid them beside him. This went on interminably. Every trade and profession took separate oaths, often differently worded, and each brought tokens of their work—the farmers corn, the weaver cloth, the blacksmith iron, and so on.

"It was a long ceremony but neither Paul nor Raphael shirked an item of it. It ended at last. We went back to the Hall and a meal was served. Raphael took Paul's heavy mantle, and waited on him. After that he and Cellino, Orsena, and Raphael were busy over documents. There seemed endless papers to sign.

"Father Pierre came to talk to me.

" 'He is standing it very well,' he said, 'it is all right for a head like his, but what of an unbalanced one? We owe you a lot, Mr. Carfax.'

"Well, I had done my best for a singularly gifted boy. I am proud of him. He found time to come to me before taking up his part again.

" 'Don't think I am going to be content with seeing you like this; I have a hundred things to say to you, but they must wait until to-morrow. Raphael is a genius, isn't he?'

"The 'genius' came and dragged him off.

"The next ceremony was the reading and re-registering of the jurisdiction during Paul's probationary year. Every sentence was read over. If any dissatisfaction was felt, it could now be declared and, as far as possible, remedied. I was surprised to learn how excellent his judgment was.

"The Regent was appointed. It was expected that old Count Orsena would have the post, but Paul made Raphael his Regent, and I saw the latter flush with pleasure and, for the first time, look moved.

"The last ceremony was the changing of the Swords of Justice. Every Prince has his own sword, which lies before him in the Court and is carried before him on state occasions, and finally, at the Coronation of his successor, is placed in the Armory beneath the shield that bears the record of his deeds, and if any Prince has been by public voice convicted of injustice, the sword is wholly or partly sheathed or

broken. It is not easy to leave an unsheathed sword—and one is broken.

"The sword of Victor d'Arenzano was brought veiled in crepe, and Paul took it saying:

" 'As I deal with the sword of my Father, may my sons deal with mine!'

"He held it up and handed it to Cellino, who turned to the people. Not a sound was heard and all heads bowed, and Cellino bore the Sword to the Armory. I remembered how a boy of seventeen had suffered an injustice in order that the sword might go naked to its resting place!

"Then he spoke to them all, not formally but in plain speech, few words but to the point and unforgetable.

"The Foresters burst into their wonderful throbbing chant, the great flag on the Keep dropped and rose three times,—it was over!

"It was on the morrow that my old pupil let me have a fleeting glimpse of all that was hidden in that wonderful head of his. He is going to Cardozza. The Orensē Palace is to be formally opened again. He loves Arenzano, but it is just 'home' to him. It could not satisfy the energy, ambition, and desire that burn in him. Romanzia is his country and it needs helpers, is crying for them. He has been on The Mount of Vision and unwittingly he revealed it to me.

" 'We have been administrators here for generations,' he said. 'What can be done, has been done, but I am a Romanzian as well as an Orensian, and I know, what so few of them know, the A. B. C. of government. If they will let me I can help and do something some day; of course I'm young yet.'

"He had mapped his life out, Arenzano, the Government of Orensē, his brother's welfare, his own ambitions.

" 'Max will do better in Cardozza for the winter,' he said.

'He's not so strong as I could wish. When he's more robust he can winter here.'

"I said he looked healthy enough.

" 'He's that,' Paul assured me, 'only he's not got so much vitality as he should have. He's forward though for his age.'

"The future leader of men explained gravely that Max already tried to build houses and was not afraid of a horse.

" 'Good heavens, Paul!' I exclaimed, 'you don't put that baby on a horse yet surely!'

" 'Only in my arms,' he explained apologetically. 'I don't let Raphael or Sylvestro take him.'

"I saw that sight later on. We were going riding and Paul took me up to the baby's room first, where we found Raphael lying on the floor building houses. I don't know what Max contributed to the building, but he certainly knocked them down. He seemed to know Paul was in riding dress and shouted, so Paul carried him down and rode round the courtyard with him in his arms. Max squealed with glee. He is a pretty little boy, but rather fragile to my thinking, though I would not admit it to his brother, who takes his slight delicacy to heart.

"Most men would find enough of responsibility here, but Paul does not. Nothing will be neglected, certainly not baby Max. But he gets through in an hour what probably took his father a whole morning to do. He makes Raphael do his share too!"

CHAPTER V

WIDENING HORIZONS

I

FOR one more year at Arenzano the young Prince watched over his young brothers and guarded with almost a woman's devotion the precarious life-journey of the small boy, who grew slowly into better keeping with his robust surroundings. Nothing was too small or trivial for the Prince's consideration. There are notes of consultation with Raphael over summer and winter clothing, Raphael's love of beauty imposing itself on Paul's utilitarianism. Accounts for velvet and fur pelisses, Tuscan embroideries, fine colored cloths and white linen. Probably the splendid peasant woman who was the baby's foster mother had no easy task to please the arbitrary young seigneur.

In many ways the Prince's rule was indulgent. He was too near boyhood himself not to sympathize with its needs. There was great liberty of coming and going, abundant out of door life, and no stint of money. But in return for all this, Paul exacted the most absolute obedience to his authority. The Prince ruled, and the Prince woud be obeyed. Casual behavior to the brother might pass unrebuked, but

disrespect to the Prince was a dire crime. In all this there was a profound wisdom, for how otherwise could so young a man, one so near their own age, have hoped to keep any semblance of order, or any graciousness of life, in that stronghold of turbulent masculine youth? If his hand was heavy, his head was clear, and his heart warm with passionate affection for his troublesome family.

So much with regard to the younger members, but Raphael presented a still more difficult problem. He was too old for the physical discipline so swiftly dealt out to the others, too complex and too dangerous to be left entirely free to follow his own crooked will. His restless soul fretted silently even under his brother's easy rule. He was passionately devoted to Paul, but this did not prevent Raphael crossing Paul's will when the fancy took him, or from faint sneers at his conscientious cares, (always excepting his cares for Max), or from egging on the younger boys to resent the authority of the elder brother, for sheer interest in seeing what the big brother would do; or from going his own way, regardless of others, still fiercely antagonistic to the world that had met him at the outset with so fierce a slap to his pride.

But Raphael's keen intellect demanded food more satisfying than sport, or playing second to his brother's rule, and his insatiable curiosity turned his mind towards natural science.

Towards the end of Paul's first year of rule, Raphael announced that he was going to Paris to study at the University, and that, while there, he intended to learn something about the "new surgery." The study of medicine in those days was by no means considered a suitable employment for a man of social standing, but Paul managed to conceal his dismay and merely asked him what earthly use he thought to make of such an addition to his studies.

"It might be useful when the wolf-drives being," Raphael remarked airily. "Knowledge is power, remember!" he added, with a quizzical glance at his brother.

"You haven't proved that power is desirable," laughed Paul. "Do you intend setting up as a surgeon in Melino?"

"It will be something to fall back on, when you turn me out," retorted Raphael unmoved at the preposterous suggestion.

II

Raphael went to Paris. There are no written records of his doings there, or what he specially studied, except that he defied convention and worked for a time under a famous surgeon who was setting the medical world of that day by the ears. The few existing letters to his brother may be amusing, but they certainly contain no reliable information of his doings.

Late in the autumn King Ferdinand died, unregretted, and his son Frederick came to the throne.

Frederick had the makings of a good man in him but his upbringing, and his marriage with Antoinette, daughter of King Albert of Slavia, undermined his character, till, both as a king and as a man, he became a byword for weak incompetency.

Yet Prince d'Arenzano undoubtedly had an affection for him. Perhaps, with the optimism of youth, he hoped to instill some moral fibre into the easy-going king. Queen Antionette was another matter. Her beauty was only matched by her reputation, or lack of it; her extravagance by her egotism, and her indiscretions by her shameless courage! She despised Romanzia and Romanzians, and used both merely as playthings to gratify her desires.

The one and only child of this marriage was a girl and at this time was three years old.

The coronation took place in November, and the d'Arenzano family, for the first time for twenty years, took up their residence in the magnificent Orensē Palace.

Raphael returned for the occasion, spent six weeks in Cardozza and had his first introduction to Court life. Little doubt but Queen Antoinette made much of the handsome boy, who could pay a compliment or fling off a witty retort with the best or worst of her *entourage*.

However, he returned to Paris, and Paul was doubtless pleased. He had enough on his hands already, with the upbringing of his three other brothers, and the whirlpool of muddy politics into which he was immediately thrown.

In three months he had founded the nucleus of a national Party which consisted of half a dozen Orensē families, who followed in the wake of their Prince with blind devotion, and some eight or nine representatives of the oldest Romanzian families who had so far held aloof from the vile corruption and rotten government that prevailed.

Of these the Prince was the acknowledged head. In six months' time the Party had doubled its size, he was a power in the land, and the King offered him a place in the Ministry.

It was an evil government that Prince d'Arenzano joined, weak, supine, and corrupt. The fact that he joined it cost him some of his following; but here he acted as he always acted, with regard to the end he had in view, too strong in his own integrity to resent wading through mud, if it brought him more quickly to the spring which should clean his country of its foulness.

Raphael received a characteristic letter about this time.

"Orensē Palace, March 4th, 1825.

"Dear Raphael. Events move quickly here. It is lucky

my legs are long enough to keep pace with them. Fellachi has gone (Fellachi was the late Minister of the Crown). For the moment Duke Avata has the job. Till I'm ready for it, *entre nous!* The new Bill on Corruption and Bribery is being framed. Of course, it won't pass until we get a Second Chamber reorganized, but that is what we mean to do, and this Bill is merely a declaration of war to clear the ground. I am desperately hard-worked and a clear-headed brother at my side would be of service. Haven't you had enough of your disgusting surgery yet, brute that you are? If your private hobby were known, I doubt if Cardozza would receive you with the open welcome she will doubtless accord you in her ignorance.

"Sylvestro distinguished himself last week by walking along the outside parapet of the St. Michael Bridge. He collected a fine crowd and a fine fuss.

"The guards could not get at him short of pushing him off, so they just had to let him finish his course. It was a bet, if you please! The penitence I contrived to produce will be as short-lived as usual, I fear. Damien had the temerity to say I was unfair to Sylvestro, because there was nothing wrong in walking along the outside of a bridge, it was only silly!

"I hope you will see your way to return, and throw yourself into the Herculean task of saving your country!

"I am your affectionate brother, Paul."

Raphael, wearying of certain episodes in his Parisian life, took this as a fair excuse to desert them, and for the next five years the brothers spent a breathless existence, politically and socially, crossed with many family cares and a due regard of their own little kingdom.

They were both indefatigable workers and players, living up to the very hilt of the passing hours. The superb health,

which was their natural heritage, was unimpaired, and, no doubt, the demands made by the Prince for a like display of energy by his subordinates, earned him the name of "The Driver."

In all these busy years, in a country where scandal and intrigue were the every day of life, no rumors of such seem to have attached themselves to the person of the young Minister. Probably his ambitions and cares left him no leisure for the temptations of idle men. He had a set purpose before him, from which he never swerved, and in that galaxy of immorality and mean interests, he stood, untainted by them, shoulder high above his fellows, and such mistakes as he made in those early days were the generous ones of too great faith in others' honor, and, perhaps, too great a readiness to use any tool for the service of his country.

III

Those were the days of Secret Societies of unacknowledged influence, and underground intrigues. Usually banned by the Church, and occasionally stamped out by irritated governments, such societies still played their part, and that no small one, in the confused politics of Europe at that period.

The Guild of St. Augustine, which was to be Prince Paul's opponent in a life and death struggle, had a strange part in Romanzian history and no attempt to chronicle the life of the great Prince can be made without giving the outline of its early history.

The Guild was unique in two particulars. It was not under the ban of the Church, and its inner activities and unguessed purposes were regulated by one man for his own aims, and uncontrolled by an outside factor.

In its origin, it was a Guild of young aristocrats, pledged

to redeem their generation from the gross vices of the age, to resist all attacks on the Church of their fathers, and vowed to obedience to the Head of their Order, which had received secular and religious recognition. It was indeed a revival of the ancient lay Order of Brotherhood, called back to life by the energies of a certain Father Justine, a Jesuit, at the end of the 18th century, in the hope of stemming the rising tide of infidelity and vice.

This Father Justine's mission began and ended in the attempted reformation of the morals of the noble houses, seeking there a barricade against atheism and plebeian sins of the populace, which were spreading like a plague, and Father Justine was not without a certain cunning.

By the exercise of careful selection and by difficulties in nomination, membership in the Guild became a hall mark of patrician blood, and was jealously sought after and guarded. Victor d'Arenzano and his brothers were amongst the early members and, no doubt, the simple vows and regulations had something to do with that Prince's exemplary life; but unfortunately, one result of its teaching was to induce the more earnest members to preserve their integrity by withdrawing themselves from the violent social world, rather than by living in its midst and insisting on a higher standard of social morals.

Father Justine died in 1808, and he left in his place as Head of the Order, a very singular man, one Emanuel Savola, a man of good family, solitary life, and unstinted and hidden ambition.

Probably Savola saw from the first the possibilities of the Guild, and his astute mind set to work to turn them to his own ends. For Savola was possessed by an ambition as great as that of Napoleon himself, with this vital distinction, that personal aggrandisement played no part in his dreams. If he were insatiably greedy for power, he wanted

no outward recognition of his authority, and if his ambitions embraced the political rather than the religious life of the day, his aims were still reformation, though it must be reformation according to the democratic gospel of Emanuel Savola. These aims were to be achieved by the purification of the patrician class for the sole benefit of the people themselves.

But he was no fool. A subtler mind and more far-reaching intellect never planned a campaign against the right of Society to rise and fall by its own standards.

Savola argued thus: "If the force of religion will not compel the governing class to govern according to the rights of the people, then some power must be found greater than religion, to drive them along the right road." He found this power in—Fear! The fear that lurked behind ugly stories, and odd difficulties; fear indeed, that succumbed to blackmail.

He was a democrat of the democrats, who would use all those who considered themselves the salt of the earth as mere workers to build up a Republic of Nations. He considered that the qualities which go to make a good governor, or good legislator, were an hereditary instinct that could not be obtained in a generation by a long oppressed class. Governing had been the trade of the rich from the beginning of riches, therefore let them continue to exercise it for the advantage of those they had hitherto oppressed.

Because Savola kept his hidden aims to himself, divulging only what was necessary to his one helper, when a helper was indispensable, and, as he worked under the sanction of the Church itself, the Guild of St. Augustine flourished exceedingly.

There were not many families in those days who did not possess some secrets unsuitable for the world's hearing, or younger lives that did not get tangled up, at some time or

another, in awkward toils, and Luigi Rivoli, Savola's nephew and sole confident, was a genius at unearthing family skeletons, and tracing the devious ways of youth. The steel hand was, however, hidden under a very silken glove. Advice, assistance, and even material aid, were generally forthcoming for perplexing situations, and the payment exacted was of so subtle a nature, as apparently to leave the obligation entirely on one side. But, little by little, the net spread, and here and there a startled member found himself acting under a compulsion none the less compelling for its unspoken pressure.

Gradually an Inner Fraternity of the Guild was formed of carefully selected members, each of whom believed himself an exceptional confident, or victim, of the astute Head, and it speaks volumes for that astuteness, that, for years, not indeed till all those most required were actually in the toils, no one of these Inner Brotherhood seems to have suspected the real scope and aim of the Guild of St. Augustine. When they did, interest and self-preservation, and, to some extent, the serious nature of their vows, kept them still faithful and secret.

The "Outer" Guild was divided into three grades: each officered by members who showed interest in the original purpose of the Guild, and these were under the control of Rivoli, who, in time, managed all its legitimate affairs. But the Inner Brotherhod was drawn from all grades, and was directly under Savola himself, though Rivoli was, on occasions, the intermediary between the Head and his victims, for such they were, though they might not recognize it.

Such is a very rough outline of the organization which Savola built up, and of which Prince d'Arenzano and Count Raphael became members at the age of seventeen and eighteen respectively, with all the picturesque ceremony entailed.

Henry Carfax must have been absent at the time of their initiation, for he left no account of it, but there is no doubt that Prince Victor looked on their membership as a safeguard against the worst dangers that beset youth in Cardozza.

Carfax did, however, leave an interesting account of a Service he attended in the Church of the Order while on a visit to the Orensē Palace in 1826, which diary also gives a good picture of the Prince's household at that period.

"April 14th, 1825.

"It is good to be with my family again and to contemplate Paul's large frame, brimming over with energy. Raphael exploits him much in his old way and led him to talk of politics so that I have already a fairly accurate idea of the present situation.

"April 15th.

"We all attended a service at the Church of St. Augustine today. It is the first time I have been there. The Church is small and the visitors are accommodated in a high gallery at the end of the church. A seat is obtained by ballot and is much coveted, at which I am not surprised, for the service is most picturesque, and the singing magnificent. Though professionals are employed, both Paul and Raphael are in the choir.

"The Church itself was built by Knight Templars I hear, with a round chancel and choir in the centre of the Cross approached by steps. There is a big crypt beneath where the members robe and a wide stairway leads from it into the Church, coming out under the gallery. The body of the Church was empty when the service commenced and then up the staircase came the procession of members, all carrying lights which they handed to waiting boys who placed them in sconces on the walls, thus making the place brighter and brighter. First came the youngest members in loose blue

gowns, then the second grade in green, the third in brown and the officials in purple. The choir wear red, except such as are also officials, as Paul is. With the choir there walked two men in black with their hoods pulled over their faces. These were penitents who had transgressed some rule and had to stand on the chancel steps through the service. I have heard it whispered that a member who has not faced this ordeal is considered rather a milksop.

"The whole ritual is very imposing.

"I suppose the Guild numbers about three or four hundred; it is difficult to calculate because after the age of thirty-five attendance is only compulsory three times a year. So far as one can judge from Romanzian society the results of the Guild have fallen far short of its founders' intentions!

"In the evening we went to a reception at the Duke Avala's. It was a brilliant throng and I watched my boys carefully. They seem to me to be mentally as well as physically head and shoulders above the rest and to my surprise very much at home with the women. Yet need I be surprised? If they had little of the feminine side of life in their young existences, what they did have was of superlative quality. Paul must marry some day. I noticed many women paying court to him but none I could picture as a future Princess d'Arenzano. One hopes his level head will not be easily ensnared.

"Arenzano, April 19th.

"We have come down here for the birthday celebration. There is a large house-party and much dancing and festivities.

"Max is here. I am pleased to find him more robust than I expected. I wondered at first if he were spoilt but on the whole I fancy he gets a Spartan upbringing if today's little episode is a fair sample.

"Wandering round this afternoon I found Raphael and

Max together. The baby—he is no more—had fallen from a tree, hurting his arm badly on a branch. Raphael was tearing a handkerchief into strips, and seeing me called out for assistance. I was made to hold Max while he cut open his sleeve, washed his arm in the stream and bound it up. Max was told he must not cry before an Englishman! Max did his best with much courage. When the bandaging was finished Raphael picked him up and carried him to the Castle. However, on the terrace there was a group of ladies and Max was promptly put on his feet.

"'It will alarm them if they see you being carried,' Raphael said, 'and no gentleman must ever do that. If you keep between Mr. Carfax and me they will not notice your bandage and you can slip indoors.'

"But the Countess de Meda, who is acting hostess for her nephew, perceived us and the bandaged arm as well. She was instantly full of alarm and questions. Raphael left Max to explain that he was really not much hurt and had only fallen off a very low branch, but his poor little face was rather white and his voice shaky. I was quite thankful when Raphael stooped and swiftly took him up and bore him off. I found Paul soon after and told him what had occurred. He burst out into tempestuous anger and strode off in search of the two, to mingle condemnations with condolences over Max's bed one presumes!

"If Prince d'Arenzano shirked matrimony, he could not be said to have escaped the cares and anxieties of domestic life!"

CHAPTER VI

THE DEEDS OF YOUTH—THE DREAMS OF AGE

I

FOR two years the Prince made strenuous efforts to enlist Count Raphael's sympathies in the reformation of his country, but though the Count would at times work with fierce energy for the discomfiture of his brother's enemies, he had none of the selfless devotion to a cause which inspired the Prince. He was admired, courted and feared in his own social world. He was essentially a sportsman, that it to say, he rode, shot, and fenced better than his comrades. No woman was supposed to be able to resist him if he chose to court her, but he chose seldom, and cared little for a conquest once won. He varied his days in the capital with solitary journeys to remote countries, and the adulations of society with the austerities of his mountain home and the good-fellowship of his brothers. Yet through all his life there still ran that strange streak of perversity. What you would expect of him, that he would not do. The sin that seemed inevitable, that he would not commit.

He was remorseless if offended and a man to whom a duel was a pleasure and yet having stalked down his prey he would

sometimes let it go with a contempt which was worse than death.

This habit of duelling was a constant source of trouble between himself and the Prince, who had never broken, so far, the oath he had taken over his dead father. Still, however bitter their quarrel, a short absence, or the mere breath of misfortune, and they would come together again with renewed pleasure. Paul indeed, was the one person against whom Raphael never bore resentment and Paul himself seemed incapable of remembering his brother's short-comings once the immediate result had passed.

II

"Her Gracious Majesty is going to be pleased to appoint me Master of the Horse," announced Raphael cheerfully, but with a watchful eye upon his brother.

Paul pushed back his chair.

"Nonsense!"

"Sober fact, but why otherwise? Do you think it too exacting and responsible a post for my years? I do know something about horses after all."

"It's altogether preposterous. You—Master of the Horse!" There was scorn in his voice.

"And only yesterday you were pressing me to get some regular employment. There's no pleasing some people!" sighed Raphael.

"She must find someone else. I won't have it."

"It's Her Majesty who is having it," murmured his brother.

Paul struggled to keep his temper, already stretched to breaking point by a harassing morning.

"I'm not joking, Raphael. You must refuse."

"Sorry—but I have accepted. You shouldn't have twitted me with having no occupation."

"Occupation be hanged!" burst out Paul wrathfully. "You call that pet-dog dalliance at a bridle rein, occupation? You a man with brains of his own! By all the dead gods, it's enough to make one want to strike some sense into that steel-plated head of yours!"

Raphael for a moment swayed between anger and amusement, and the latter won. Paul's tempestuous wrath always amused him because of his amazing language.

"Perhaps I'll pick up some horse sense in the royal stables," he drawled, "though from all reports they are in a bad way."

The Prince realized he had lost the game in loosing his temper. He could do nothing now with Raphael, though the appointment pleased him very ill, and that not only for the reason he had given, as Raphael very well knew.

"If the duties prove too strenuous, I can always appoint a deputy," said Raphael consolingly. "I am convinced Her Majesty would not wish me to ruin my constitution with overwork."

He still kept a wary eye on his brother, whose quick anger having evaporated, looked grave enough.

"I can't see that your constitution is any concern of Her Majesty's," he remarked frigidly.

"She admires my particular style of beauty," laughed the other. "I can imagine her being quite annoyed if I turned up on duty looking fatigued."

The family good looks were regarded as a mere family possession, as impersonal as a coat-of-arms, or their physical strength, always legitimate subjects for "chaff."

Raphael lounged toward the door, paused and looked back.

"Dear nurse," he added with gentle sarcasm, "there have been beautiful women before Cleopatra, and plenty of men not quite such fools as Mark Antony."

With that he went, and Paul with a sigh resumed his work.

The Queen got her Master of the Horse and malicious tongues added another name to the scandalous chronicles of the court.

III

Emanuel Savola and his nephew Luigi Rivoli were seated together on a chilly November evening before a blazing wood fire. They were a strange couple, and they discussed strange matters.

Savola was a little bent figure of a man, with fierce hawk-like eyes which appeared veiled, until, on a sudden, he flashed them on an object and revealed a depth of fanatical personality that swallowed up argument as fire consumes wood. Rivoli was a different type. He was a doctor of science of some renown and not unpopular, a clever if satirical conversationalist, and a man of some means. In appearance he was not ill looking, with a long narrow face and dark eyes rather near together, and which, like his uncle's, he kept veiled. Unlike Savola, when he chose to open them, they sent forth no fire to scorch the observer, but rather revealed the cold petrifying depth of icy water.

The two were speaking of the Chief Minister, who had just appointed a young and almost unknown man to the post of Foreign Minister.

"Was it one of your appointments?" asked Rivoli rather abruptly.

"No, but the man I would have chosen."

The other looked his surprise.

"Oh, clear-eyed scientist," mocked the old man, "do you see nothing more than the foolish public who do not deserve the Chief Minister they have got?"

"We have not all your insight, sir," returned Rivoli with lowered lids.

"Prince d'Arenzano cannot undertake the portfolio of Foreign Minister in addition to his own, but he does not mean our foreign policy to be decided by anyone but himself, and there is not a man in the old set who would not take tradition into office with him. It is cold to-night, Luigi."

"Yes it is cold." The response was mechanical.

"This young man," went on Savola meditatively, "is doing—work that I want done without my wasting an ounce of power to get it accomplished! Never waste power, Luigi, hoard it as a miser does gold, only when you use it, use enough—never fail—*Never!* This d'Arenzano will not fail, and some day I shall gather him in, and then, together—" he sighed.

The logs in the grate broke and crumbled away into ashes. Rivoli quietly piled on more. His face was immovable but in his heart the black seed of jealousy had fallen, destined for evil growth.

"Have you any hold on him yet? I find his life exemplary!" There was the suspicion of a sneer in his voice.

The old man looked at him and the sneer seemed reflected on the elder face, but it was not directed against the same object.

"My dear Luigi, you are a clever man or you would not be sitting here, but there are matters in which you are still a fool. Fear is not the only spur to force men to our purpose. This Prince of ours needs no spur, but when his

boyish enthusiasm is wearing thin, a hint may illumine a nearer horizon and a more attainable goal. He is at heart, though he does not know it, a democrat. If I could have foreseen him—but I was strangely blind, I thought him like his father. If I had forseen—!"

His voice trailed off again. Rivoli perfectly understood that his uncle regretted taking him into his confidence and feared his ability to carry out those vast plans of his. While he already hated the man who had supplanted him in Savola's mind, he hugged himself with joy that it was too late and that he was too deep in his counsels to be discarded with impunity. There was no sign of this in his face or even voice but inwardly he registered a vow that this princely paragon for which his uncle sighed should prove a broken reed. Few things vexed Savola more than for his prognostications to prove false.

Rivoli, like his uncle, had ambitions and dreamed dreams, but the central feature of his dreams was not triumphant democracy, it was the more common and more easily achieved rule of one despôt—Luigi Rivoli! The accumulation of vast power, wealth and glory for one person's advantage—Luigi Rivoli's! In short, his life was consecrated to his own advantage.

Savola began speaking of international politics and a journey he must make and of the future. His voice became clearer as he spoke, his bent figure more upright. Rivoli, watching him, decided he must still walk warily.

"The time will come when we shall sweep down the tyrannies of thrones, when secret compacts and wars shall cease and those who govern shall know themselves to be the servants of the people! The people shall be no more mere providers for their appetites and slaves to their whims! There is but one way, Luigi, to do this. The very weight

of their misdeeds shall drive these men who rule into the path of reform. What the Church has failed to do with her threats of the future I,—yes I, Emanuel Savola,—will do, have done, by fear of immediate penalty. Yet let us keep clean hands and use our power for one object, one purpose, and remember those who do not work against us work for us!"

He stopped abruptly, exhausted by his own fire, for he was indeed an old man!

Rivoli spoke and his voice was smooth and respectful.

"It is a great conception sir, and one which the Church herself can hardly condemn. By the way, the spy Becco wishes to get a friend of his taken on. Becco was one of your men. Is he reliable?"

Savola frowned. He disliked the word spy, as Rivoli knew well. He disliked also that the machinery of his organization should be brought so crudely to his notice. He had given all that into Rivoli's hands because he disliked it. Rivoli knew all these dislikes.

"Becco is a good servant to the Guild," he said with an accent on the word 'servant.' "I always found him discreet, but take no one into the inner Service till you have proved him. Were this man's parents orthodox?"

Luigi shrugged his shoulders.

"It is of moment," said Savola quietly. "The faith of a man's parents, my dear Luigi, is of more importance than his immediate convictions."

Soon after this Rivoli took his departure. He chose to go by the longest route, because so doing he passed a certain house in whose upper windows a light was burning. Then Mlle. Maria Lais was really at home as she had said!

Such was the suspicious nature of the man that he could not accept the word of the one woman on whom the whole

force of his passions was bent, without visible confirmation. She had sent him word that she could not attend a certain party that evening where they were to have met, owing to indisposition. He railed at the circumstances that prevented their meeting. He was anxious for her health, but his doubting heart was relieved of a shadow by the tell-tale light in her window.

CHAPTER VII

RAPHAEL

IT was in 1826 that Count Raphael first met the king of Zinnia and the acquaintance rapidly ripened into a friendship which lasted all their lives in spite of the disastrous career of the younger man.

King Augustine appears to have been paying a ceremonious visit to one of his own nobles and amongst the guests was the young Romanzian, whose vitality and enjoyment of life seems to have greatly attracted the delicate, languid king. The friendship thus commenced resulted in a less ceremonious visit on the part of His Majesty to Arenzano itself, where he seems to have taken part in the highly exciting and hazardous wolf drives, which, under the direction of Prince d'Arenzano and Count Raphael, had become a very specialized sport in the late autumn season.

The d'Arenzano family, and more especially Count Raphael and Count Sylvestro, paid several visits to Mantos and no doubt enlivened that chilling court and provided it with thrills of excitement not at all in acccordance with its ordinary frigid routine.

It is a curious coincidence that both King Augustine and the d'Arenzanos owed much to an Englishman. Leslie

Thornton, the King's devoted friend, had come by accident into his life during his father's reign and was cut adrift from him by no fault of his own in the boy's greatest need. He returned in time to save him from utter ruin consequent on the cruelly unsympathetic rule of the regent, Prince Ruachi, which indeed did permanently injure the health of the hypersensitive young king.

From that day till his death, Thornton never left his service, serving him with rare devotion. Amid all the intrigues and jealousies of the Court he appears to have led a secluded life, never really separated from his difficult royal friend but never intruding in public affairs.

He did one thing for posterity in common with Carfax, he kept a voluminous journal which never saw the light of day till after King Augustine's death and his own, though he left instructions for its use after a lapse of time and we have not scrupled to draw on it for these chronicles.

Mr. Thornton seems to have greatly approved the friendship with the young d'Arenzanos, although his diaries betray much mental anxiety over the strenuous days of sport and adventure into which his king was led and for which his indifferent health hardly fitted him.

On one visit to Mantos Count Raphael was instrumental in saving the king from an assassin, and carried a scar on his cheek as long as he lived as a memento.

A friendship thus cemented would be broken with difficulty, yet in the autumn of the same year an event occurred which but for Thornton's discretion would undoubtedly have shattered it.

It is an event which reveals the wild vein of cruelty in the Count and the fact that danger to one brother provoked it is no excuse for what he did to another. It lays bare the oddly streaked nature of the man in whom good and ill in-

stead of being interwoven seemed divided into distinct bands with no gradations to soften their violent contrast.

THORNTON'S DIARY

"October 11th, 1828.

"I trust this is the last wolf drive we shall attend. It is true that since our first experience there have been no serious accidents till now, when the Prince himself has come to grief, though I believe only slightly by their reckoning. It happened this way.

"We were with Count Raphael at one end of the line and the Prince with Sylvestro was at the other. The latter had had no luck that day and seeing a wolf emerge and stand a moment undecided as to its route, he waved his arms and shouted to attract its attention. He succeeded only too well. The apparently outraged animal sprang at the shelter and on to the Prince, who was borne to the ground. A terrible mêlee ensued. When matters were straightened out we saw a dead wolf on the ground, Sylvestro unharmed, but the Prince lying face downward, to all appearances dead. I heard Raphael cry out 'Paul!' in a tone of poignant anguish; then he flung Sylvestro aside with fierce curses and examined his brother.

"I waited by the king, who was very white. Once we heard that the Prince was not dead but only hurt, he said quietly that we had better set off for the Castle and relieve them of trouble, which we did.

"Supper that night was a gloomy affair. Raphael was in an evil temper, Sylvestro miserably silent and Damien, though he did his best, obviously insufficient to cope with the situation.

"Matters did not mend next morning. A 'Court' which should have been held by the Prince was taken by Raphael, who acts as Regent. Sylvestro did not appear and Damien

suggested fishing for salmon in the Azibe. This pleased the king and we passed the day not unpleasantly. Sylvestro did not appear that night. Raphael had recovered his spirits and was brilliantly and wickedly amusing, but Damien appeared to be on the point of boiling over.

"The king asked for 'Baby.' There was a faint hesitation and then Damien blurted out:

" 'He's hurt,—bitten by a dog.'

"We were much concerned, but Damien would say nothing else and Raphael put in smoothly:

" 'It's nothing to worry about.'

"Whereupon his brother retorted hotly:

" 'I'd worry the dog if I could!'

"Raphael laughed and plunged into talk again.

"October 13th.

"Sylvestro was about today with his arm in a sling and looking very seedy. Even his smile was crooked and I never heard him laugh once. I am scarcely sorry we are leaving to-morrow for everyone seems a little unhinged and Raphael is fully occupied with the Prince, who progresses well, we are told. I fancy Raphael must have been acting as night nurse, for he looks so haggard, almost as a man walking in his sleep.

"He was playing cards with the King and I heard the latter exclaim:

" 'Good heavens man, are you asleep!'

"Raphael stretched his arms.

" 'Can't a man revoke on Thursday sir, when he hasn't been to bed since Tuesday?'

"It was only eleven but we retired after that.

"I had written so far last night when Damien came to my door much agitated. He wanted to know if I had any sleeping stuff with me such as the King has to take at times.

Sylvestro couldn't sleep and was in pain. Raphael had sent him, I gathered.

"I asked what had happened to the dog as I hurriedly sought the medicine. The boy broke out into passionate wrath.

" 'Dog! There's no dog—It's that devil Raphael, who did it because Sylvestro got Paul hurt!'

"Utterly bewildered, I demanded explanation.

" 'Oh, he raked up some old law, and accused Sylvestro of endangering the Seigneur's life. Cellino could not prevent him. The penalty for that is branding. The beastly old irons are all there—but not a man would do it of course, so Raphael did it himself and now the wound's poisoned and he talks casually of Sylvestro losing his arm, the brute! Is that the stuff? Thanks.'

"With that he hurried off with the strong narcotic, which is diluted to suit my king's need. I remained walking up and down, trying to master my horror. Could Raphael be guilty of such uncivilized cruelty? His indifference even in the presence of his victim was evident. His callous facing of possibilities, incredible. A phrase I had once heard Sylvestro use came back to me.

" 'Raphael's such a revengeful brute!'

"I had taken it as one of 'Baby's' extravagances, and behold it is insufficient!

"Then I remembered Raphael's agonized cry when he thought his brother was killed and his savage anger with everyone afterward. It was not only revenge for the Prince's injury that had prompted his wicked deed and yet—he is the man who saved the king's life!

"I was disturbed again. This time it was Romano, Raphael's incomparable servant, trim and immaculate as usual.

"Would I be so good as to explain to Count Raphael the

strength of the dose? How strong may he give it? He is anxious not to cause Count Sylvestro discomfort.

"Discomfort! I followed Romano to Sylvestro's room. Crouching against the door and weeping bitterly was Sylvestro's servant, Ugo. At sight of me he fell on his knees and caught my hand.

" 'Excellency! They have shut me out and the Count Raphael will kill him!'

"Romano pushed him contemptuously aside.

" 'We need no pestilent fools!' he cried. 'Dost thou suppose, thou thrice born idiot of the plains, that the Cavallero Thornton will countenance a murder, or Count Damien, or I? It is thy noise we cannot stomach! Come Excellency.'

"We went in.

"Sylvestro was lying on the bed half undressed, his face white and drawn with pain. Damien stood by him, torn by helpless pity. Raphael lay comfortably back in a chair by the fire, doing nothing, the bottle that I had sent and a glass at his side. He rose and faced me.

" 'I am sorry to trouble you, but these new drugs are not things to play with. I am not sure of the dose. It should be a heavy one to take effect. How much can I safely give?'

"I could hardly bring myself to answer him, and hurried to examine the invalid. He was in a very bad way, burning with fever, and with a pulse that fluctuated wildly. Still, having regard to his abnormal strength, I was inclined to venture on a heroic dose.

"I poured it out and took it across to him. Raphael followed me and leaned over the bed to raise his brother, but at the sound of his voice Sylvestro started, shivered, and burst into tears. I pushed Raphael away somewhat casually, gave my medicine, and was conscious of fierce anger, barely controlled, standing by my side. However, Sylvestro seemed to regain a little reassurance from the dose, or my presence,

though his suffering was still too great for him to be conscious of much else. He seemed to grope pitifully for support. Damien looked at me with aching eyes.

" 'I'm no good as a nurse!' he groaned.

"Suddenly Raphael pushed me roughly away and slid his own arm under the sick man, saying very gently: 'It's all right, Baby, you are going to sleep.' And, as by a miracle, Sylvestro turned and settled himself in his brother's arms and sank into silence, which would end in blessed oblivion. Raphael turned his head and flung at us with a mocking smile:

" 'Need you all spend the night here in case I strangle him in his sleep?'

"I could find nothing to say to Damien when we came away, and I am utterly disinclined for sleep. What horrified me the most is that no one seems particularly surprised at Raphael's behavior. I have never quite trusted him, but this callous cruelty is revolting. There is no vice I could not more easily forgive!

"October 15th.

"We shall be in Mantos again tomorrow. Before leaving Arenzano this morning I went to say good-bye to Sylvestro but almost backed out at finding Raphael there dressing the wounded hand. The invalid looked wretchedly ill but was evidently better.

" 'I'm all right this morning,' he said cheerfully, 'but this ruffian insists on keeping me in bed in revenge for my keeping him up all night. Isn't he a brute?'

" 'Mr. Thornton has long been of that opinion,' Raphael said coolly, 'and it's no use trying to keep things up, Baby. He knows the horrid truth.'

"Sylvestro demanded to know what idiot had told me, and betrayed all the embarassment that should have been his brother's.

"When I left Raphael followed me out, to my wrath.

" 'I thought you might like to speak to me,' he said softly, closing the door behind us.

"I told him I should be content never to speak to him again.

" 'You can easily achieve that,' he retorted lightly. 'You have only to explain the mad-dog episode to the king. Perhaps you have done so?'

"I could not explain to him how I shrank from tearing from my King the friend of his heart, as the story must inevitably do. I did say, however, that I had to remember the possibility of his turning on a friend, since even his own brother was not safe, and for once he had no retort ready.

" 'You must use your own discretion of course,' he said and went away.

"I did not see him again till we were starting and then he was talking to the king in the airy way His Majesty finds so fascinating, apologizing for the invalids most gracefully.

"How much does he really care? Am I to tell the king?"

The matter seems to have been left in abeyance. Thornton's reluctance to tell His Majesty was very strong and we may be sure consideration for Count Raphael was not the cause.

The Count disappeared from the family circle for a time and Thornton's only knowledge of what occurred was gleaned from a letter from Count Sylvestro.

"October 28th.

"Dear Thornton. In answer to your inquiries I can report all well here. Max is promoted to a pony and bids fair to become a good horseman. Paul is entirely himself again, but I am the guilty cause of a family quarrel which has led to Raphael's retirement from our happy circle. It's all

through that beastly hand of mine. Damien considered it his duty to tell Paul to examine the official records of the days he was ill and so—as you English say—'the fat was in the fire.' There was a row royal, and I felt like a bone between angry brothers. Nobody cared what the poor bone thought of it! The upshot was that Paul deposed Raphael from his 'Regency' and put Orsena in his place, since I declined the responsibility. 'Regency' isn't in my line at all. Anyhow, Raphael has gone and for certain will never love me any more. And Paul deprived of his society isn't all honey. So there we are!"

At the end of December, King Augustine wrote to invite Count Raphael to spend the New Year with him and this produced a crisis.

The Count wrote to Thornton, taunting him with his silence and declining to be indebted to him any more, and wrote his own account of the unhappy affair to the king. Thornton preserved his letter, but the king burned his. He asked Thornton some questions and then never alluded to it again. Later on he renewed his friendship with Count Raphael. He seems to have been more convinced of the latter's penitence than Thornton was, who, at the best, considered the Count bitterly ashamed of his want of self-control.

The following autumn came the adventure with brigands which nearly wiped out for good and all the whole d'Arenzano family with the exception of little Max, then aged seven.

CHAPTER VIII

THE ADVENTURE OF THE BRIGANDS

SAVOLA finally decided he could do no longer without the co-operation of the young Minister. He gave Rivoli orders that he was to be 'roped in.'

Rivoli received the order with outward calm and inward fury. He was convinced that once Prince d'Arenzano came within Savola's clutches his own day of authority was over.

There was a crudity in the scheme which he concocted to save the situation which would have been impossible to his cool judgment later on. He decided that the d'Arenzanos were inimical to his interests, and must therefore be removed from his path, or that such a blow must be dealt the Chief Minister's prestige that his immediate popularity should be weakened.

Two notorious brigands, who for some time had terrorized an ill governed province, had been captured, tried and condemned to death. Their connection with one of the many secret societies of the day had not transpired in the trial and it was a surprise to most people when talk of reprieve or even pardon filled the air.

At this juncture of affairs, King Frederick was asked to Arenzano on a friendly shooting visit and accepted.

Count Raphael was summoned from his voluntary exile and perfect harmony seems to have been re-established in spite of the painful episode of the previous autumn.

The best account of the romantic adventure is found in a letter from Sylvestro to Mr. Thornton, who, on King Augustine's command, had despatched a courier to Arenzano on first hearing of the affair, for authentic particulars.

"Arenzano, September 10th.

"Dear Thornton:—

"His Majesty is very kind to be so concerned in the family health, which certainly for the moment is at a low ebb, though, as this letter will convince you, not so low as rumor would have it, one at least of the family being in a condition to put pen to paper. Here is a plain unvarnished tale for His Majesty, to go with the formal acknowledgements and answer to his kindly letter.

"The affair, as first conceived, was an informal pleasure party. King Frederick was here and all the family to meet him. We had been shooting near Trevasca—where as you know the king has a small estate of his own. Before starting on the long ride back we were to have refreshments at a small disused mill-house which is on our side of the boundary line. The king had no escort but ourselves. Two men were sent ahead to prepare the meal. They, poor devils, were seized, bound, and gagged as they entered the supposed empty house. Raphael and Damien were the next to enter the mouse-trap and were overpowered in turn, though heaven knows Raphael made them pay for it! Then I, marching happily along before the king and Paul, walked right into the ruffians' arms. Imagine our feelings, knowing who was coming and unable to give warning! Did I say two stoutish brigands sat on each of our forms? We had no arms, and no time to draw our knives. I expect we all

made good though useless efforts to bite through our gags. They let Paul and the king walk straight into the room where our little feast was prepared and then as Paul's amazed glance fell on us, they fell on him! I thought he meant to put up a big fight, but he suddenly desisted and seeing the king was held and not bound, demanded of our captors to state their desires like reasonable men. Well, they wanted nothing less than the complete pardon of two notorious robbers, who had been condemned to death the previous week, and who were to be executed in two days' time. It was quite obvious to me His Majesty would make no difficulty whatever of getting us out of a scrape, and probably of finding some way out of his own dilemma afterwards, but they were cunning brigands. The pardon must be signed by the Chief Minister. Paul exchanged rapid confidences with the king in English, which language presumably our friends did not know. The result was the king shook his head and looked obstinate, but he's a poor actor. However, the brigands accepted my brother's suggestion that if he was left alone with the king a few minutes he might bring him to reason. As this seemed to entail moving all of us, Paul also suggested that he and the king should retire to the small inner room which opened out of the big one and had no other door and only one small window high up, which could be easily watched from without, as he pointed out. Whatever may be the king's limitations in the art of the stage, my brother is a past master of it, for he got his way and I, recollecting a certain secret passage below the hearthstone in this inner room, had hard work not to complacently wink at Raphael.

"The king appeared to take some persuading however. We could hear Paul's voice raised loudly and convincingly and the king feebly answering. Finally a lower key was taken. To my strained ears the conversation assumed more the sound of a monologue than an argument.

"The polite brigands grew tired at last and flung open the door.

"My! They were angry brigands then—polite no longer! We were less surprised than they to see Paul standing alone on the hearth declaiming Latin verse to empty walls. He explained with great, if wasted, courtesy that the king, being a magician, had changed into a dove and flown out of the window. It will interest you to hear that they sent round to inquire of the guard if a bird had flown out—just to be on the safe side. Such a phenomenon not having happened, they told Paul that if he would not sign the pardon or tell them where the king was, they would destroy his brothers, one by one, beginning with his heir. Raphael's nerve apparently gave way at this juncture. He said he didn't want to die and would show them the secret passage. I think even Paul was thunderstruck for a moment, till Raphael demanded a ladder and began exploring the cornice, which was of painted wood. Presently he said he thought he had a clue and commenced gravely to tap the walls inch by inch. This took nearly fifteen minutes and when one of the brutes tried to accelerate his memory by tapping him over the knuckles, he suddenly stopped and said that after all he had forgotten it. Then they really began to lose their tempers in a deplorable manner, and I was the next victim. But my memory was always bad and not even the fire, lit to warm our festive party, could revive it. It might in the end, but Raphael clumped me on the head with a brotherly kick and I am not a competent narrator of the further proceedings.

"Raphael, however, contrived to get his slim hands free from the cords and sprang at the nearest man, knocking him headlong and seized his knife. Somehow he fought them back and got to Paul, while Damien, bound as he was, flung himself in the way of the brigands, keeping them back while Raphael slashed the rope with which Paul had been retied.

It took about three seconds I believe. Then they had a glorious time. It turned me green to lie there, merely a mat for heavy feet. They were ten to three, but our side got a couple—not bad as they had taken our knives. That made matters more even. Then the king, with a party of villagers, arrived just in time to see Paul subside under his seventeenth wound and Raphael, standing over him, was stabbed as he fell across Paul, getting a knife in his arm that was aimed at our Seigneur's heart. Damien was already disposed of for the moment and I, as stated, a mere mat.

"At the sight of reinforcements the enemy fled, and while some pursued, others attended to the casualties.

"1. The Prince, with seventeen wounds, chiefly on hands and arms.

"2. One brother and heir, bleeding cheerfully to death with a severed artery and many lesser hurts.

"3. One more brother insensible and useless.

"4. One other badly hurt but sensible, who was useful in tying up the wounded artery.

"5. Three wounded brigands and three dead ones.

"Not a bad fight on the whole and the original brigands, the *causa belli,* are duly executed. I believe secretly that His Majesty is of opinion that their death is dearly bought, since his Chief Minister lies low and his family with him.

"There is the plain tale devoid of decorations.

"We are all alive, though I had a horrible fear of being left to be crushed beneath the weight of ministerial responsibility. Paul is now mending and Raphael may—if he keeps quiet. At present if he lifts his arm, he faints and he likes experimenting. Damien is crawling about and we have races as to which can crawl fastest. I can at present.

"Assure His Majesty of our deepest respects and gratefulness for his sympathy and tell him such parts of the

above narrative as you may deem suitable. I am, my dear sir, your devoted friend,

"Sylvestro d'Arenzano."

So much for the Count's cheerful description of the epic encounter, which is confirmed by Cellino's more tragic record.

Cellino gives a vivid picture of the return of the unfortunate d'Arenzanos and of the king's despair. The greatest surgeons in the country were summoned and all that the skill and knowledge of those days could contrive was done. But the two elder d'Arenzanos lay for some weeks in danger and it was largely owing to Count Raphael's selfless devotion that the Prince's life was saved.

The Count was really the most seriously injured of all though the fever which fell on the Prince passed him by. Cellino's account of the affair is worth giving for the further revelation it throws on the Count's character.

CELLINO'S DIARY

"October 28th. The Prince makes no progress and is still wildly delirious. His nurses are distracted how to keep him still, for on his stillness depends his life, while his great strength renders this a stupendous task.

"29th. Last night, after my turn of watching by the Prince, I was sleeping in the corridor outside his room when Sister Veronica came out wringing her hands.

" 'Sir,' she entreated, 'go and fetch Count Raphael. The Prince calls for him unceasingly and nothing else will quiet him.'

"I reminded her that Count Raphael must not move himself and she said despairingly that in that case she feared the Prince must die.

"I went into the room with her and listened to his con-

tinuous cry for his brother, and then in despair went to Count Sylvestro. My heart bled for the dilemma into which I had to plunge him. He went to the Prince's bedside himself and then without a word more to Count Raphael's room, but, getting there his courage failed him and he leaned against the wall, undecided and uncertain. There we stayed for quite five minutes. My heart ached with pity for him, but it was not my burden. How could I say who must live or die?

"At last he drew a long breath and went in.

"Count Raphael was not asleep and he spoke when Romano would have stopped us.

" 'Is Paul worse?' demanded the Count.

" 'He is bad and he wants you, Raphael,' murmured poor Count Sylvestro, appalled now he was face to face with his brother's helplessness. 'They say it will kill you if you go,' he added desperately, 'but if you don't Paul will die!'

"Raphael commanded Romano to bring him some clothes, and Romano dared not disobey. We got him to the Prince's room somehow but it must have cost him prodigious will power. The Prince knew him at once and tried to sit up. The Count put his hand on his chest and told him he'd go unless he kept quiet. His Highness lay still now but began talking more wildly than ever. Never shall I forget the words in that cold dawn, so cruelly distinct in spite of his delirium and fever.

" 'You mustn't let me die while he's alive! Raphael mustn't succeed me, I can't trust him!—'

"And Count Raphael sat on his brother's bed with his one free arm (the other was in a sling) about him keeping guard over those restless limbs and he said:

" 'You needn't bother about it Paul, he's dead already.'

" 'Are you quite sure?' demanded the fever stricken Prince, insistent.

" 'As dead as mutton—go to sleep.'

"Then there was quiet for a few minutes, but he broke out again the same dreadful question. The Sister pulled out her rosary and began to pray. The sweat poured off my face. Count Raphael went on assuring him time after time of his own death.

" 'You understand why?' the Prince said in quick monotonous tones. 'He tortured Baby—he perverted the law, he mustn't rule.'

" 'Yes, I know. He won't ever rule, Paul, don't fear about it.'

" 'Oh for God's sake come away!' wailed Count Sylvestro.

"His brother told him fiercely to hold his tongue, and the voice droned on:

" 'He might even hurt Max—you mustn't let me die till he's dead.'

"At that Count Sylvestro burst into tears, for we all know how Count Raphael loves the little Count. But the droning voice got weaker and the drug began to take effect, he turned towards the man who held him so firmly and muttered:

" 'Well if you say he's dead, it's all right, I'll take your word.' Whereon he settled himself to sleep.

" 'Shield the light,' said Count Raphael over his shoulder and we darkened the already dark room. I put down the Count's white face to the cruel words, and marvelled a little as he put his head on the pillow by his brother's. We stood holding our breath for a while. Then the doctor approached and as he did so Count Raphael slipped to the floor in a huddled heap. Only dire necessity held us silent as we hurriedly moved him, for we saw, too late, that the struggles of the delirious man had nearly achieved his terrible desire. The ligature on the Count's arm had slipped and the newly healed wound had broken open afresh. He had let it be so

until his brother slept. For the present the Prince's danger is over, but it looks as if the fear which had eaten into his heart since the day he learned of the Count's perverted judgment, would never be possible again.

"November 10th.

"Count Raphael continues to live against his own wish apparently. He will see no one and lies with his face to the wall.

"The Prince makes rapid progress. Sister Veronica told me that the little Count came to see him today. She feared he might be frightened but this is what happened. He entered with his funny little bow to his brother, climbed up on to his bed and kissed the bandaged hands.

" 'Are you better sir, dear?' he asked, 'and was it a fall or a fight?'

"He was told a fight.

" 'Sylvestro was afraid you would not get well, or Raphael either and that he would have to be Prince, and he hated it. I lit two candles every day for you to our Lady, and one for Raphael, but I chose a big one for him.' Then he added quickly, 'I'm not crying, Paul, it's only the smell of the stuff they put on your hands. Shall I go now?'

"He went quite naturally, but once outside, burst into tears because his brother looked so white.

"November 15.

"The Prince is up today and went as far as Count Raphael's room. He knows nothing of what occurred that terrible night. Count Raphael would hardly speak to him I hear.

"November 25.

"It is heart-breaking. The Count still rejects all advances from His Highness and he has ceased to visit him. He just puts it down to his illness. The Count is never a good convalescent, but to us, who know, it is a different matter. I

could bear it no longer to-day and went to Count Sylvestro and begged him to explain to his brother.

"November 27.

"The Prince sent for me this morning and asked about that night. He said he had not the heart to question Count Sylvestro too closely.

"Presently he made me take him to Count Raphael's room. He still needs an arm for any distance.

" 'I must make my peace if I can,' he said, 'though it's the devil of a business. I swear I did not know I thought like that, but how am I to convince him?'

"I do not know how he did it, though the hardest man would find it difficult to resist our Prince when he set out to obtain a favor."

CHAPTER IX

MARIA LAIS

AS far as can be ascertained, it was about 1829 that Count Raphael first met the beautiful Maria Lais.

Of all the many sins to be laid to his charge, his dealing with this young devotée is perhaps the most unforgiveable, apart from the terrible consequences to which it led.

Maria Lais was the saintly daughter of worldly parents. Educated in the cloisters and radiating so spiritual an atmosphere that those about her noted its pure fragrance even before her amazing beauty dazzled their senses, it seemed a mystery to many that she escaped a vocation.

Probably her parents had no mind to devote her loveliness to a problematic world when it could be turned to their advantage in a nearer and by no means problematic one. At all events they favored Luigi Rivoli's somewhat slow wooing, urging it, one may suspect, with undiplomatic persistence. But Rivoli was not to be hurried. The Laises were of no social standing and such a match might possibly find little favor in Savola's eyes.

Nevertheless he was deeply and passionately in love. It is impossible to doubt it in the light of his behavior after the catastrophe. In losing Maria Lais, he lost that rudi-

mentary fragment of a soul which might, under different circumstances, have grown to normal proportions.

And he lost her through the deliberate cruelty of Raphael d'Arenzano.

Maria Lais, no doubt, believed herself to be in love with Rivoli as far as she could at that time be in love with anything below those spiritual regions which were her natural home. There are a few letters of hers extant, written to the Mother Superior of the Convent where her young days were spent. It is not possible to read them and doubt their genuine purity and her simplicity of mind. At the same time she writes with a fervor that suggests a capability for passion which not infrequently has part in the making of a saint.

Where Raphael d'Arenzano first met this beautiful girl we do not know. They hardly moved in the same social circle, but meet her he did and he appears to have been less attracted by her physical charms than by curiosity as to the real significance of her spiritual fragrance. He must have discerned that it was no mere pose. One can also surmise that he discerned the woman behind the saint and was interested in watching a struggle between the two. Such a surmise is quite compatible with what we know of him. A mere vulgar intrigue would have had no interest for him without a still deeper motive.

But there did exist a deeper motive.

It is no surmise to state that at that period Count Raphael had had more than one encounter with the President of the Guild of St. Augustine. Those picturesque vows he had taken as a boy sat lightly on him. He had been forcibly reminded of them by the Guild and called on to submit to the prescribed penalty more than once. The alternative of renouncing membership of the Guild involved a publicity and scandal he was unwilling to face. Therefore he shrugged his shoulders and submitted with the best face he could, so

one must believe. It did not, however, tend to make him cordial to Luigi Rivoli.

Be his motives what they would, he set himself to study the girl whom Rivoli loved, succeeded, first, in convincing her of his own need of reformation, secondly, of her peculiar fitness for that dangerous task, and thirdly, of her own overwhelming love for him.

The probabilities are that he never made love to her at all, that was not his way; also there would have been intervention from the parents, who could not have hoped to entrap so big a fish into the matrimonial net.

The few particulars we have point to the view that he led the girl to believe that he withheld any declaration because of her engagement to Rivoli. She therefore broke off that engagement and arranged a meeting to tell him what she had done.

But Raphael was already tired of his experiment; he had not only proved his point that the woman could over-ride the saint but he had avenged himself on Rivoli to his own evil satisfaction. He obeyed Maria's summons because he considered it time to end the episode. It took him perhaps ten minutes to convince her that he had not the remotest idea of marriage with her.

His success was complete.

He could have made whatever bargain he liked with Maria Lais, saint that had been, lover that was. He did not, however, want her on any terms. This inexorable fact penetrated to her soul at last and drew out the bitter cry:

"But what am I to do?"

He told her with perfect and careful courtesy that, if she did not care to re-establish her engagement, she should travel; that with her beauty and money there was no capital in Europe where she would not find the world at her feet.

He spoke smoothly enough till she forced plainer words

from him and a flick of anger. Then he said unforgettable and unforgiveable things. His solitary bid for decency was that he broke up her mountainous love into the dust of hate, and having done that left her. He believed quite sincerely the hate would be good medicine for her sickness.

Apart from the appalling wickedness of it as it stood, could he have foreseen that from the ashes of a saint may be born a devil?

She took his advice and travelled, and shortly those in touch with a certain side of life heard of her and of her beauty in Paris, Vienna, St. Petersburg. She was called *La belle Dame sans Merci.*

In a certain lonely house in Cardozza, a man to whom these rumors had come, heard of them, learned they were more than rumors, and the last spark of decent humanity died in his heart. He swore by the only thing left sacred to him—his ambition—that if it involved the cost of that ambition itself, Maria Lais (and incidentally Luigi Rivoli) should be avenged on the House of Arenzano, and the oath was heard and registered in the inner court of justice that watches over the stumbling steps of humanity.

But Raphael d'Arenzano went away on one of his lonely expeditions, and had greater trouble than usual to convince his rudimentary conscience that he had transgressed no item of his private code. Indeed, he so entirely failed to secure such an acquittal that he returned abruptly to Cardozza, and for some months society found Count Raphael of a humor that it was dangerous to cross.

CHAPTER X

EPISODES

I

IN 1830 Count Sylvestro married. The first of Cellino's eaglets to make the adventure, though plentiful had been the snares laid about their feet.

Sylvestro was apparently not only a born gambler but a most open hearted lover, and the Prince had with difficulty rescued him from various undesirable matrimonial projects, of which many amusing letters still exist, though space does not permit us to insert them here. Nor can we even give the delightful account of the final tempestuous courtship which ended in a marriage, pre-eminently satisfactory to the whole family from the Prince himself down to little Max, who became the particular charge of the Count and Countess Sylvestro or, as they were always alluded to in the family letters, Count and Countess "Baby"—the old absurd nick-name having held its own.

One may easily imagine that the gracious presence of a woman added again a softness to the grim walls of their home. She presided over their ceremonies with quaint dignity—she was very young—and on all occasions was

watched over and protected by her husband and brothers-in-law and guided along the very unfamiliar paths she had to tread, with a touching devotion.

Her own diary and letters are full of incidents, when in her apparent ignorance of men she came up against certain masculine angles and outlooks and still more frequently came in conflict with rigid laws and customs of the House.

Now it would be Damien's impassive quixotism, or her husband's cheerful recklessness, or Raphael's unaccountable moods, or the Prince's imperious will and stormy temper. It must have taken time to find her feet in all these varying currents but she undoubtedly did so, and the sunny days held no hint of the black shadows which were to end her happy existence all too soon.

II

The Queen's carriage was waiting at the Queen's entrance. It had been waiting some time, and the tired horses shook their heads impatiently and the equally wearied footmen struggled to conceal their prodigious yawns, but still Her Majesty did not come.

A sudden whirlwind within the entrance and Princess Tessa, escaping from the control of a discreet matron, ran to the top of the flight of steps and stood looking down at the waiting equipage with satisfaction.

She was a quaint beflounced little creature, with a small sallow face and straight dark hair, and exceedingly wide-awake eyes.

"I told you Mamma would be late," she said scornfully, over her shoulder to the panting lady who followed her.

But at that very moment Her Majesty appeared. The Chief Minister for the Crown walked by her side and was

talking to her earnestly. Just behind them walked Her Majesty's Equerry and Master of the Horse.

They all three came to a stand on the top of the steps, and the Queen perceived Tessa.

She turned round to her Equerry.

"I forgot to tell you I was going to take Tessa," she said.

"At least, you are then certain of an amusing ride," he murmured.

He too had been waiting and was more than a trifle bored. The long hours of idle duty often bored him though he would not have admitted as much to his brother.

The Queen turned for a final word to the Chief Minister. Count Raphael cast a critical look at the horses.

"I shall sit in the back seat all alone," announced Tessa suddenly, and she flew down the steps and into the carriage, and took up the position she had mentioned, spreading out her little belaced skirts and person as much as possible.

"That's my place, Princess," said the Equerry languidly, but watching her with amused eyes.

The child straightened her lips and looked back at him defiantly.

"Tessa," called the Queen, in her slow drawling voice. "You cannot sit there, Count Raphael is going with us."

She continued her talk with Prince d'Arenzano.

Her Royal Highness showed no signs of moving. She looked furtively at the Count, whom she knew well to be her very good friend.

"If I sit by Mamma my dress will be all crumpled, and no one will see me. I shall sit here, therefore."

"It's not etiquette for me to sit beside Her Majesty," replied Raphael persuasively. "I should have to drive in a carriage all alone. You would not like that, would you?"

She looked doubtful, then her face cleared.

"You can't. It would take too much time to order a

carriage. Mamma is very late now. She will give in if I sit tight. Then I can see who bows to her and who to me."

The Queen came down the steps.

"It is all settled then, Paul. We'll have the fête on the 17th. I thought you said though, not very long ago, we had too many fêtes!"

She laughed as she looked at him. Queen Antoinette very much admired the Chief Minister. She was well aware that he often managed her, but she submitted in an indolent, tolerant fashion. She was certain now that she was being "managed" but was unable to find the reason. It did not trouble her greatly.

"Tessa, I told you to sit by me."

Tessa half shut her eyes and gripped the edge of the seat with her small fingers.

"It makes me feel sick to ride facing," she announced candidly. "Count Raphael can have my place."

"It would make me feel far more sick to occupy a false position," said Raphael plaintively, with a glance at his royal mistress.

The Queen got in and leaned back wearily.

"Don't be tiresome, Tessa. It's too hot to argue. Sit by me."

"I tore one dress this morning, and the Countess says it's very extravagant," she remarked gravely.

The Queen stamped her foot.

"We are late now; Count Raphael, make her obey."

Raphael assumed a helpless air.

Prince d'Arenzano came to the door of the carriage. He looked at the Queen, and he looked at his brother, and finally he leaned forward and looked very firmly at the little Princess who, naughty child that she was, answered his look with a coquettish pleading that made him long to smile back.

"Princess," he said, in his most peremptory and sternest

manner, the most stern command that had ever fallen on her ears, "my brother is waiting to get in. Go and sit in your proper place."

She met his eyes defiantly and then meekly got up, and did as she was told.

The Queen clapped her hands.

"Oh, Prince," she cried. "I'll give you half my kingdom, if you will only come and take the Countess's place—in the nursery!"

The Prince shook his head:

"I've a nursery of my own," he said drily. "It consists of some millions of people and one small brother."

The little Princess never took her eyes from his face, and he, who had smiled at her mother, looked grave again when he looked back at her.

The carriage started and Her Royal Highness was unusually quiet. Presently Count Raphael leaned across to her.

"Don't be so downcast, Tessa," he said, sympathetically. "He's a bully, we know, but if you wait long enough you will get even with him."

"You'll undo his good work, wicked man!" remarked the Queen.

Tessa ignored them both.

"Do people always do what he tell them?" she questioned.

"Mostly."

"Why?"

Raphael looked his despair.

"I don't know!"

"Nor do I. I didn't want to, but I did!"

"A good thing too!" put in her mother severely.

Tessa again ignored her, and continued to gaze at Raphael.

"Do you do what he tells you?"

"Quite often. It's the easiest thing in the end."

"And Max?"

"Oh yes, always."

"I wonder why we do," murmured the child, looking away.

"Don't be so serious, Princess. See, there's some one bowing to you. Will Your Majesty permit us to stop at Rumel's?"

"You spoil her dreadfully," retorted the Queen, indulgently.

Rumel's was raided for the biggest box of chocolates procurable. The Princess soon forgot her problem and proceeded to enliven the drive with remarks which caused her mother assumed embarrassment and her Equerry infinite delight.

"Paul would soon manage her," he thought. "But I'm glad he can't. I like her best as she is, the little imp!"

III

When the royal carriage had driven away, the Prince went back into the Palace with the air of a man who, having won a victory, must make haste to consolidate it.

He went straight into the room where he knew His Majesty was awaiting him, with no impatience, be it noted.

His Chief Minister closed the door, and said without preamble:

"Her Majesty consents to postpone her visit, sir."

The King laid down his book, and regarded his Minister with an admiring smile.

"Magician! And for how long?"

"Long enough for our matter to be settled. Nothing can then be said as to undue influence and favoritism."

"But you will give Slavia the preference all the same?" questioned the King, with an ingratiating smile.

"The preference will go to whatever country offers us the best terms; it's purely a commercial affair."

"Still you are the judge of the terms."

"Yes; exactly."

There was a little silence which the King broke with a laugh.

"You'll do what you like, King Paul, and our humble wishes, as usual, go for nothing!"

The Chief Minister swept round on him with swift anger.

"Sir, I have asked you not to call me that! I am your Minister, and I am trying with all the wits which Heaven has given me to bring back to your country and mine a little of her former glory. If you are moved to do the same, then in God's Name do it. Take my post. Be Minister and King too, and the hearts of your people will rejoice. But if not, then leave me free to accomplish the end you approve."

"My dear Paul, have I not left you free? When do I interfere?"

"You would urge me now to consider your private convenience, and Her Majesty's, before the good of Romanzia. The thing is impossible. Her Majesty's natural predilection for her own country might influence matters—your pardon, if I put it bluntly, sir—if she in any sense were a popular Queen, or cared anything for Romanzia; but you know that is not the case. This commercial treaty I am trying to make will be made on its own merits!"

The King nodded.

"I never supposed otherwise. I was only teasing you, *mon ami.* Tell me how you made Her Majesty postpone her visit to Slavia?"

"I represented to her that the new Austrian Ambassadress had succeeded, while in Naples, in establishing a Court around her that flung the Royal Court into the shade, and that we were all looking to her to keep that lady in her proper place here. It was a question of being beforehand; the Neapolitan Court had been neglectful of its dignity. Her

Majesty is inclined to favor a fête to introduce Her Excellency to her new *entourage.*"

The King stared at him with open admiration.

"Magnificent!" he murmured. "All the same not so long ago you deprecated more fêtes, you know."

"They will not be so costly as a Slavian visit might be just now!" returned the Prince drily.

Again the King murmured, "Magnificent!" and then began to take an interest in the proposed fête.

"Could dancers be arranged for? Those new dancers from Spain?"

"That is a matter Your Majesty can very well settle with the Queen."

The Prince's voice ceased to be dry, it was blunt.

The King laughed with a little deprecating air.

"Oh, my Paul, don't be angry with me; but as I told you the Queen has been too occupied to see me for three days; they have been dull days!" He made a little grimace.

Prince d'Arenzano looked at him with something akin to pity and more nearly connected with scorn, but he was case-hardened. King Frederick's blind uxorious worship of the notoriously unfaithful Queen was one of the many little wheels of the machinery with which he had to push along his vast plans. He used it as he would have used anything to further those designs, but it grated on him. He had hoped better things of Frederick till hope had died; now his best desire was that the King should remain quietly acquiescent. As a rule he was, but not to-day, because Her Majesty's will concerning a projected visit to her own country was at stake. The Prince had had to give up two hours of precious time to carry out a small diplomatic manœuvre. The pettiness of it exasperated him.

CHAPTER XI

THE GUILD OF ST. AUGUSTINE ASSERTS ITSELF

I

IN 1830 Savola, finding that Rivoli made no advance in "roping in" Prince d'Arenzano, made a bold bid himself for the young man's support. He knew that age was creeping over him. He could never hope to reap the harvest of his life's work, but he greatly desired to leave the harvest to a worthy heir and he saw that Rivoli was not worthy.

The Chief Minister was more or less proving himself the champion of all those ideals which, in the days of the universal republic, would, Savola believed, be the ordinary lot of all countries. His desire to link forces with the Prince became irresistible.

One day therefore, the Prince received an order to attend a meeting in "Room 3" at nine in the evening, signed, not by the Council of Seven, but by the Master of the Guild itself. Its curt wording and tone were of intention to test what power the oath of obedience had over the ruler of Romanzia!

The Prince read it, frowned, smiled, shrugged his shoulders and went. It was inconvenient, but an oath was an oath.

So far the Guild had not greatly interfered with him. He still regarded it as a possible regenerator of society, and was not averse to finding his younger supporters amongst its members.

He was aware that its disciplinary measures had on more than one occasion been dealt out to his own family, and had felt slightly annoyed, since he considered himself, with reason, to be an efficient guardian of their morals; but he never regarded it in the light of a grievance.

II

The crypt of St. Augustine's at that time covered far more ground than the church itself, and communicated by a subway with the street in which Rivoli lived. Prince d'Arenzano entered by the church, passed the warden on guard with a nod of recognition, and went down to the dimly lighted pillared hall, where the members robed for such services and functions as served to keep them in mind of their obligations to the Guild.

Since it was the rule, the Prince donned his gown, perhaps just a little impatient at the formality and a little curious as to the cause of the summons. He did not suppose he had broken any rule of the Order and, if the matter were political, he would be glad of the opportunity to state, once for all, that his position in the Guild, (where he held an official post,) and his public life had no connection with each other.

The great crypt was deserted and but for one swinging oil-lamp, dark. The lamp lit the central way and left the pillared aisles in black shadow.

The door at the end opened into a narrow stone passage still more feebly lighted by a little carrying lamp standing in a niche. He had been here before when the passage was

brightly illuminated and many footsteps echoed down its length . Now, his own steps sounded a little too loudly in the silence.

Coming into Room 3, from the dimness without, he was blinded by the sudden light and, as he turned to close the door, he saw his shadow painted on the wall outside, odd and grotesque on the rough stones.

It was a small room, and furnished simply with a table and two chairs. There was a fire burning on the hearth and the air was heavy and close. The shade over the big lamp that stood on the table was so tilted that the light fell full on him as he entered. On the other side of the table sat a little old man with curious hawk-like eyes and a thin keen face. A fur rug was wrapt around his knees. He leaned forward as the Prince stopped, dazzled for the moment by the glare, and he put his hand on the shade but he said nothing.

His visitor, suddenly conscious of remissness, raised his hand in salute. The shade was immediately readjusted and the circle of light confined to the table.

"Sit down, Prince," said Savola, waving his hand.

Prince d'Arenzano took the empty chair, opposite the old man.

"You are, I think, an official of the Guild?" The voice was suave and friendly.

The visitor touched the shining badge on his gown.

"My duties have not been arduous, which is perhaps fortunate, for I am rather a busy man, Master."

"I am well aware of it. I have sent for you to-night to talk over your intentions. It is possible we may be of use to each other."

The Prince answered steadily and courteously:

"I am quite willing to tell you my intentions man to man, and I am willing to admit that the Guild has done something in preparing the ground for me. I have even thought it

might do more. But I have no conception of the Guild as a body politic."

Savola's thin lips twisted into a smile. His eyes, however, remained veiled.

"In that matter of the Bill against Bribery and Corruption in your first year of office, Prince. You may recollect that it very nearly passed into law against your reckoning and perhaps against your wishes?"

The question was half implied.

The Prince considered a moment.

"Yes," he said frankly, "I admit that if that Bill had passed, it would have troubled me. It was not meant to succeed. If it had, then the bigger measure of last year would never have been carried."

Savola nodded. "So I supposed. The first Bill failed because the Duke Avala failed to support it, and he failed to do so at my directions. I foresaw your stronger measure."

The Prince frowned.

"For good or evil I can see no purpose in the Guild touching politics."

Savola went on as if he had not spoken.

"In 1828 you succeeded in carrying the Coinage Reform. But if Garno had not failed his following, on the night of the great debate, your narrow majority would never have carried the Bill. It was I who secured Garno's absence. No—wait!" He raised his shrivelled hands as the Prince was about to speak in hot anger. "Wait, I have not finished yet. In 1829, you carried the Education Act through the support of the Church. The support of the Church depended on the Jesuits. It was I who bought them. I considered it worth while. It was a great Act."

The Prince sprang to his feet.

"Sir," he cried passionately, "what you are saying goes to prove that you, not I, rule Romanzia! I have not asked

—I do not ask any such assistance from you. What I have to do I am competent to do myself—at present."

"I am glad you added that," retorted the thin dry voice, with a certain acidity. "You think you can now stand on your own feet. Well, do not push away too soon the ladder by which you climbed!"

"I climbed by no ladder but my own," insisted the Prince fiercely. "If you are seeking to restore the power of the Jesuits in this country, you are working for nothing. It is a thing I will never permit."

The hawk-like eyes flashed open then, but there was a tinge of admiration in their glare.

"How well it is to be young and so assured of authority! Calm yourself, Prince. I, too, will not permit it. They are the enemies to the rule of Liberty I seek; so whether you will or not, we are partners in that matter."

"I am at a loss to understand you, sir," said the Prince coldly.

"You surprise me! Listen again. I am old. I would avoid the vices of age: repetition and garrulity. The world has suffered for countless generations from the dominion of men who have never known the common life of man, never learned the law of obedience, or that sterner law which says: 'Work or starve.' The world has been ruled by those who have never been ruled, for their own benefit and the benefit of their order. One country has broken that vicious rule, but only by means as vicious and as destructive to Liberty as the power that has been broken.

"Is it necessary for a country to heave itself to destruction before it can be born again? I say, No! The existing machinery of government, though in many cases obsolete or too complicated, yet on the whole is that best adapted for producing the best life for the community. The fault lies with those who work the machine. Those who brought it

to birth were masters of government; they have passed, and left it to ignorant hands that heed neither its purpose nor its working, but who do believe it exists for their greater glory and the confusion of the rest of mankind!

"But I—I who know—tell you the machinery is good! It needs only brains and trained hands to guide it. And these can best be found in the descendants of those who planned it originally. It would be the work of generations to train the ignorant to use it. It is for them to reap the fruits of it, to enjoy the results of their own labor, and to flourish on the *toil of those who work* the machinery for their benefit. Readjust your ideas. See once for all that it is the governing man who *serves;* the governed who are the real rulers. All the revolution that is needed is means to force the governing class to recognize that they are the servants of the people! *You,"*—he flashed round on him,—"you know this! What you don't know is that, in order to drive the fact into the heads of your aristocrats, Force is necessary! Force! But it cannot come from the people!"

The Prince moved restlessly. He listened with amazement, but he sat with his face like a mask to conceal his secret mind from those keen eyes. The shade of the lamp was again tilted, and the light fell full on his face. He knew it but he let it be.

Savola spoke eloquently, but the propositions he put out were all supposititious ones. He spoke of a Europe reformed without revolution; of the possible establishment of a new force behind the existing Guild of St. Augustine. He spoke of nothing as actually existing, or even *en train* to exist.

He voiced his most cherished ambitions as mere possible dreams. He alluded to the Guild of St. Augustine as the School from which such great results might spring.

Prince d'Arenzano heard him to the end, his acute mind

gauging and judging the man before him, his sanity—his power—his possibilities. That he was a danger to all for which Prince d'Arenzano stood he was certain; but was he a negative danger that would burn itself out in mad visions of universal power? Or was he actually a firebrand that might set the world in a blaze?

There darted across the mirror of his memory strange events in social life, unexpected actions by men of established characteristics. Was the barefaced system of blackmail which he discerned behind Savola's clever sophistries responsible for this? He was just thinking it was imperative to gain time and make sure, when Savola went one step too far.

There gleamed amid his glowing periods a sombre spark. He would never have uttered even to himself the sinister word "Assassination." Like other dreamers he covered evil with ambiguous names. People were "removed" from the path of the World Reform. It was a mere gleam.

At last he ended and there was silence.

Prince d'Arenzano shifted his chair, and leaning his arms on the table, he looked thoughtfully at Savola. Then with quiet deliberation he altered the angle of the lamp-shade, so that the old lined face was illuminated.

"I should like to be quite sure that I understand what it is you propose," said the Prince. "You ask me to become one of a Council of Three, who, by extending the activities of the Guild of St. Augustine, would be able to more or less control the Governments of Europe. You propose to use this power for the benefit of the people and the overthrowing of all those who resist their legitimate demands. You give me reason to believe that the Guild has already obtained influence over certain people in Romanzia. Am I to understand that this power is solely derived from the vows of obedience taken to the Guild, and renewed on entrance to what you call

the Inner Circle, supplemented, it may be, by suitable propaganda by the officials?"

His alert eyes were fixed on the face opposite, and he received in turn a look as searching as his own, but more inscrutable, and more remote.

"Am I to understand," went on the Prince, "that Garno was influenced by his oath, or by your persuasion, or by your order, to relinquish his opposition to the Coinage Reform?"

"What does it matter to you why he acted as he did? You are old enough to have learned the wisdom of—ignorance!"

"I have a weakness for keeping my hands clean."

Savola waved his hand scornfully.

"You confess it is—a weakness?"

The Prince was silent.

"This is the question between us," said Savola slowly. "Given the help of the Society—not the Guild—you may achieve your greatest dreams in ten years. Without it ——" He shrugged his shoulders.

"And you—yours?"

Again Savola waved his hands.

"My dreams? My ambitions? Not in a life-time! It is for the next generation that I work."

"I think," said the Prince quietly, "that we both work for the future, but I repeat we must work apart."

He rose to his feet.

Savola made a sign. Instantly, the Prince straightened himself and stood at attention as a soldier before his commander. It was an entirely intuitive movement, the trained eye obeying the know signal mechanically, yet he maintained his attitude. He was not prepared on the moment to throw over his allegiance to the Order. It might indeed be imperative to preserve it!

Perhaps Savola read his thoughts.

"You have taken the full oath of obedience to the Guild?" he said sharply.

"I admit it. If you are asking for my silence on what has passed between us, I understand that is obligatory, considering my vows."

"Had I not been sure of that, you would not have heard it."

The Prince bit his lips: he was beginning to dislike the position.

"You remember the first rule of the Order?"

"Certainly. It is hardly likely to escape my memory today!"

There was a note of warning in his voice, but Savola went on remorselessly.

"Repeat it!"

At this peremptory order, flung at him as he himself might fling an order to his lowest servant, the blood rushed to the Prince's face. He held himself in with the greatest difficulty; still he did it—and he laughed.

"You are bent on refreshing my memory, sir! The rule is: 'Within the Order no title or rank or honor is recognized other than that pertaining to the Order itself.' I venture to think I am a very faithful member, sir!"

His eyes laughed but his voice betrayed an infinitesimal amount of indignation. It was well done. Savola recognized a new quality in Prince d'Arenzano. He was a consummate actor.

"Your faith is not called into question."

"Then—why?" He gave a comprehending gesture.

"Your memory might momentarily fail you—that is what I feared. So you think you can do without me, Prince?"

The Prince bowed.

"You may have cause to change your mind."

He raised his eyebrows. "A threat?"

Savola shrugged his shoulders again, and then sank back in his chair. His eyes seemed to veil themselves, and he appeared a tired and even bored old man. He glanced at the fire and shivered. The rug had fallen from his knees and he seemed to lack strength to lift it.

The Prince stepped swiftly round the table.

"Allow me," he said kindly, and picking up the rug he wrapped it round the shrunken figure.

"You are kind, Prince. I regret we are not to work together, for I am old and would like longer days with you than you are willing to give me—yet!"

"You think we shall come to terms?" He paused a moment, one hand resting on the back of a chair, and looked at Savola thoughtfully. Once more the keen eyes flashed up at him, and this time it was Savola who smiled.

"I am sure of it. When I want a thing badly I get it."

"I understand. Am I dismissed?" He spoke with amused irony.

The old man gave a sign of dismissal, and his visitor went thoughtfully away.

III

Rivoli's house in the quiet street behind the Church of St. Augustine was a prosaic, respectable affair. He kept a few efficient servants and, on occasions, entertained in a dignified, superior way. His guests were usually scientific of legal lights, though now and again unexpected guests from quite other walks of life were present. On the first floor, facing the street and running the width of the house, was the room which was his particular sanctum, a big rather bare room. At one end was a large desk-like table with multitudinous drawers and complicated locks. At the extreme other end of the room was a long deal table with a

sink at one end, taps, and odd appliances; and over it, a shelf filled with strange-shaped glass bottles, and bright instruments, and china and glass trays. Between the windows was a bookcase filled with scientific works.

Rivoli sat by the desk and read and re-read a cipher letter which was spread out before him. He had just received it, and the grimness of his face was small evidence of the agony within, where the shrunken measure of his soul shrivelled up before the decoded message, as ancient parchment shrivels at the flame.

He had spent months in tracing Maria Lais and at last his agents had sent him this. Had he known anything of prayer, he would have prayed for their failure, that he might at least remember her, if he must needs keep her in mind, as something uniquely spiritual, standing apart from his cruelly cynical conception of womanhood.

This episode of Maria Lais was now for him finished. Neither repentance nor suffering could restore to her what was lost, that white robe of ignorance which had stood for righteousness in his blinded eyes. He had not know till now that, behind his outraged pride as a man duped and fooled, there had lingered in him some hope that she had fled, not to the muddy waters of the world but to those cloisters where some remnants of her old sainthood might find a pitiful lodgement. That hope was dead forever. He took the letter and, holding it over a metal plate, burned it carefully and methodically. Then he re-registered a certain oath concerning the House of Arenzano.

He rose and, crossing the room, took from the shelf above the long bare table a wooden box. It contained apparently nothing except drugs, but he touched a spring, opened a secret compartment and took from there a little brown book fastened with brass locks. Returning to his chair, he turned over its leaves.

There were names on the top of each page, names or numbers, and beneath, in small clear writing, various statements concerning the names—Statements of vital interest to the person to whom they referred. He paused long over the name of Gaspar Sittola, put the book back and wrote a letter.

"To Count Gaspar Sittola.

"It is possible that you may be shortly applied to for a character of a certain servant, whom you may forget employing. If, however, your memory should serve you well enough to recall his excellent and trustworthy character, and if through your medium he is fortunate enough to obtain the situation he desires, then it may be in the power of the Society of St. Augustine to secure for you the return of a certain letter of July 7th, 1827. The Guild desire to release you from needless anxiety about this letter, once they are convinced of your repentance of the indiscretion it reveals; and it offers you this opportunity of convincing them of the same. There is no occasion to communicate with the Council, who will be perfectly aware of whatever action you take in the matter.

"Signed by order of the
"Council of Seven."

The orders of the Council were invariably signed in this manner, and most members seem to have firmly believed in the mysterious Council, but who "the Seven" were, was one of the thrilling riddles of the Guild. For all one knew, they might include one's next door neighbor, one's bitterest foe or dearest friend. Under the Council's orders, commands were given and deeds done which would have made the good Father Justine turn in his grave.

The irony lay in the fact that this Council wsa practically non-existent. It was a figment of Rivoli's fertile brain. A barrier behind which he was building up that secret power,

which was not only to make him indispensable to Savola, but was to lead him to giddying heights of domination over lesser men.

Having written the letter, he rang a bell and a man appeared. A harmless-looking individual with nothing whatever to indicate that he was bound body and soul to the service of a man who held his life in his hands.

Rivoli gave him the letter and a brief, significant order.

"You are to see," he said, "that the Steward of the Messengers at the Orensē Palace gives in his notice before the end of the month, or that the post is vacant by then."

The man simply bowed and went out.

Rivoli rose from his chair with a little gesture as if he would repudiate something or someone. He went over to the bare table, hesitated awhile, and then slipped on a loose blouse over his coat and began to busy himself with his chemicals over the porcelain sink.

Thus employed he had quite the appearance of an ordinary human being, engaged in ordinary pursuits, and amenable to ordinary emotions.

IV

A letter from Prince d'Arenzano to his brother, then visiting King Augustine of Zinnia.

"July 19, 1831.

"Dear Raphael:—

"I am going to confide to your discretion an annoying episode of which I am not certain I have seen the end. Your opinion will assist my decision.

"On July the twelfth, the fight over the re-distribution of the taxes began. Certain speeches were much in my mind when I returned and I had occasion to go down about two in the morning to my room to verify some figures which

were bothering me. The night lamps were lit as usual and as I opened the door of the library I saw a man dart across to the inner door. It proved to be Benis, the new Steward of the Messengers. I did not handle him any too gently, but he was singularly self-possessed, and said he had awakened with a sudden fear that certain letters had been left in my room which should have been taken. It was a thin story and, as you may imagine, he was dismissed. Old Donati nearly had a fit when I told him. He assured me with tears in his eyes that the man had come to him with the best recommendations from Sittola. The last man was taken ill so suddenly that Donati said he had no time to get a substitute from Orsenē. I told him to take on the job himself until he could get one of our own people, and dismissed the matter from my mind.

"Three days later I received a letter from that infernal Council of Seven, saying, if you please, that I was to reinstate Benis. You can guess the color of the atmosphere. I'm afraid I lost my temper.

"Two days more and Benis had the effrontery to appear himself with a second 'order.' This time I used him to take a letter to the Council and to Rivoli, who is its mouthpiece. I expect he did not care for it for an answer came that 'I must obey the order or report myself in Room 7 on the 22nd.'

"This really passes a joke. Needless to say, I do not intend to reinstate Benis and I have very little inclination to report myself anywhere except with the purpose of telling the Council it's not going to be my '*vade mecum*' in domestic life.

"What Benis has to do with the Guild passes my understanding but it might be well to understand! I don't want to cross swords with Sittola at this moment. He has rather too much to say about the new bill. Imagine the absurdity

of my being plagued with the ridiculous affair at such a time! I dare not express my real sentiments on paper.

"Convey my affectionate esteem to the King, and my wishes for his good health and enjoyment of your incomparable society!

"I am your affectionate brother,
"Paul d'Arenzano."

What Count Raphael thought of the "ridiculous affair" may be gathered from the fact that he abruptly quitted Zinnia at an hour's notice and by dint of most strenuous efforts arrived at the Orensē Palace with his man on the night of July 22nd.

There he learned that His Highness had gone out late and had not so far returned. Whereupon the Count and his servant went out again, without even waiting for refreshment, or giving any explanation for their appearance.

V

Count Raphael had had more dealings with the orders of the Council of Seven than his eldest brother. Since it seems very unlikely he would have considered himself bound by an oath taken in boyhood, one must put down his silence concerning his experiences to something else than mere faithfulness. Fear, in the ordinary sense, must be ruled out. A carefully thought out discretion, prompted by a pride that hid its wounds at all costs, better meets the case. At all events he was under no delusions as to the Council's power of enforcing its threats.

He was perfectly aware that in Rivoli, he had an implacable enemy, who would stop at nothing to repay that wrong which Raphael cursed himself a hundred times for committing. But it had never occurred to him that Paul, the

all-powerful Chief Minister, might also fall under that enmity that carried such loaded weapons.

He knew nothing of Savola's vast schemes and plans, or his bid for his brother's co-operation, but he did know that Rivoli was no respecter of persons, and he was sick with a furious fear that Paul might be in case to learn as he had learned at heavy cost.

He went through the now dark and silent streets with Romano beside him, swiftly and with set purpose. And he felt in his coat occasionally and fingered lovingly, not the last new marvellously small pistol which fired with such admirable precision, but the long, keen Arenzano hunting knife.

He went straight to a street of sombre faced houses which lay behind the Church of St. Augustine and stopped at an unpretentious door that appeared to belong to no particular house.

"Your knife," he whispered to Ramano. "The lock's a trifle."

By sense of touch he inserted the broad blade in the lock and pried it open. It led into a narrow dark passage, down which the two men went: and to one, at least, it was not unfamiliar. The passage sloped downward and made a right angle turn, so that in a minute they were passing under the street they had just crossed.

Then came another door, open this time, and leading into a small room or vestibule, lighted by a lamp standing on a table, on which were writing materials and an open book.

There were four doors to the room; the one by which they had entered; a corresponding one in the opposite wall; and two smaller doors side by side on their right. Raphael first went to the opposite door, opened it and looked out. It gave into a narrow passage. The Count took the key which was on the further side and locked this door. Then he turned to the smaller doors.

A key hung on the wall between them. He seized it, unlocked and flung open one of the doors and nearly fell over the unconscious form of his brother.

VI

Count Raphael wrote down the Prince's account of what happened at his first encounter with the Council of Seven. It was found with a few papers which he gave to Cellino before his marriage.

It was a cold account but a formidable indictment against the President, though it was not necessary to put it in as evidence in the great trial.

The Prince had obeyed the summons, with the intention of plainly stating his mind as to the unpardonable interference in his private concerns.

The crypt was better lighted this time, and he was too taken up with his indignation to feel any uneasiness.

On entering the room he believed he had at last solved the Mystery of the Council of Seven. For seven men sat round the table, one of whom was Rivoli. On each side of him were three gowned and masked figures, sitting so immovable that, but for the gleam of their eyes, the Prince might have taken them for dummies. Each man's hands were folded under the long sleeves of his gown and until the given moment arrived, not one of them spoke or moved.

Impatiently angry at the "theatrical display," the Prince advanced with a very perfunctory salute and was about to speak when the President stopped him.

"You are summoned here, Prince d'Arenzano, to answer to the Council as to why you have not obeyed its orders concerning the reinstatement of the man Benis."

The Prince was nothing loath to answer. He appears to have made a very plain statement indeed, to the effect that

he did not intend to reinstate the man or accept "orders" from the Council outside its legitimate sphere.

He was assured in return that the Guild recognized no limitations of action, and that opposition to its ruling would end in the breaking of his power in the country. Also he was told that the Council desired to be lenient with him, and that nothing was required but his apology and conformity with the order!

This to a man who from boyhood had hardly known what it was to have his word disobeyed, or his will thwarted!

It may be presumed that the Prince answered with some heat.

The alternative was apparently to accept punishment at the hands of the Council.

"Or repudiate my connection with it altogether," suggested the Prince.

In return Rivoli took out a book and read, in his cold high voice, the three separate vows which the Prince had made to the Order.

All this time the six silent figures never moved, nor appeared to listen. The affair might have been a duet between the Prince and the President.

The Prince had to decide on some course of action instantly.

He was convinced that Savola was the directing genius of this "farce," as he still believed it, equally certain that they would not have carried it so far without adequate physical power at their command to prevent his turning his back on them, and leaving the precious Council to its own devices. Allowing that the disguised figures might drop their steely indifference and oppose him bodily, it would be a case of seven to one, and a futile indignity. Surrender to their will being equally impossible, there remained sub-

mission to his vows, which he was not prepared to admit he had broken.

He bowed ironically, and declared he would submit to whatever penalty the Council might choose to inflict, and wondered in his mind of what sum he was to be mulcted.

Instantly the six figures were round him, though they did not touch him, and, Rivoli leading, they went out to the little hall or room where Raphael later on made his entrance. The Prince was requested to sign his name in the Penalty Book and was shown, as a curiosity, his brother's signatures, occurring not once but many times.

It must have taken all his self-control and iron will to submit to all this, and, considering his fierce temper, one can judge thereby the importance he attached to maintaining his own point, and getting out of the trap without loss of self-respect.

One of the men unlocked a door and disclosed a small, utterly empty room, lighted by a lamp hanging on the wall just inside the door. The rest of the men stood each side of the entrance, and signed to him to enter. With a shrug of the shoulders, he complied. The door was pulled to, but as it shut an arm removed the lamp, and with the clang of its shutting Prince d'Arenzano found himself in absolute darkness.

It would have meant little to some men, nothing to Raphael, whose experiences were of a different nature, but to the Prince it was a torture as insufferable as inexplicable.

For what seemed to him quite a long period but was probably not many minutes he staved off his foe and, as a possible protection, made a bandage of his handkerchief and bound it tightly over his eyes to simulate a voluntary blindness. It was useless. The hereditary terror crept over him out of the blackness he could almost feel; fought its way, inch by inch, against reason into his brain, beat down the ramparts

of fury behind which his mind sought refuge, was at last triumphant and waged its cruel will with him, until exhausted nature could bear no more and semi-unconsciousness fell on him. Lifted, and fell again, stroke upon stroke; the lifting more agonizing than death! So Count Raphael found him.

"What made you come?" demanded the Prince, when they faced the matter next day, after sleep had in some degree restored him.

"I know something about their little ways," retorted Raphael grimly.

"*You* aren't a fool in the dark."

"I may be in the light, under certain conditions. The conditions suit the victim!"

"You never told me." He stopped pacing to and fro, and looked fixedly at his brother.

Raphael flushed. "What use? I never dreamed they'd dare to touch *you.* You can't suppress the Guild without enormous scandal, can you?"

"I doubt if I could at all. Every one in my Council is a member."

"Well, don't imagine they have done with you. Though," he added drily, "if you know why they have their knife into you, perhaps you can force them to sheathe it; if you can't ——" He gave an expressive shrug.

The Prince laid a letter on the table before his brother.

"Read that," he said quietly. "It was on my table this morning. Leonarde knows nothing of it."

The letter ran:

"Enmity to the Guild will mean your political downfall. As it has been the ladder by which you have climbed so it can be the hammer under which you can be crushed. The offer once made is still open. For the immediate future, however, the question of the redistribution of the taxes

depends on your discretion. Signed: The Head of the Society of St. Augustine."

Paul leaned over his brother's shoulder and put his finger on the word "Society."

" 'Guild' no longer, you see. What are we up against, Raphael?"

"Something big. Can you accept their offer, whatever it is?"

Paul smiled.

"Succumb to *force majeur?* No! Not in any case," he added.

"You are positive?"

"Positive. In a fair field I can hold my own."

"The field won't be fair. Are you going for revenge, or the taxes?"

"The taxes," said Paul gravely. "The rest can wait."

CHAPTER XII

A PERILOUS DEFENCE

SUCH was the opening of the duel between the Guild of St. Augustine and Prince d'Arenzano. It is significant that he did not mention anything to his brother of his interview with Savola, and that though the outrage to his person must have rankled bitterly, his devotion to his self-appointed task was stronger than personal vanity. He regarded the episode as closed, and pursued his way as if it had not been.

It was Count Raphael who determined to free his brother from the toils which he appreciated better than the other. He considered not only that the Prince's work was in jeopardy but also—what probably weighed far more heavily with the Count—his personal honor and safety.

The indignity dealt to the Prince roused a passion in him that his own experiences had failed to do or, at least, which discretion had shackled. He was possessed with the idea that the Council would stop at nothing but the subjugation of the Prince's honor, and the thought of it mastered his usually sane reason. He would have given his body ten times over to save his brother's life, and in the depths of his complex nature he knew he would give his very soul to save the same for the Prince!

Count Raphael knew nothing of Savola beyond the fact that he was the old "Commander" of the Order, whom he had seen in his first initiation. He did not connect him in any way with the government of the Guild, which he believed to be centered in Rivoli.

As far as he was personally concerned, the affair of Maria Lais made it impossible for him to move against him on personal grounds. It was outside his private code of honor to do so! He had twice attempted to force Rivoli to a duel with the intention to give him opportunity to level the score between them—again according to his code! Rivoli, however, made it abundantly clear he would not fight.

Count Sylvestro had no reasons to love the Guild. Count Damien was indifferent to it, until Raphael's story revealed it as a powerful organization bent on injuring one man, and that man his brother and the Head of his House!

These three young men, having faced the situation, determined that Rivoli was a danger to their Prince, and must be removed in accordance with their vows of fidelity to their brother. Accordingly, they formed a plan which was very nearly successful. All the particulars of it are found in the before mentioned papers which Count Raphael confided to Cellino on his marriage.

II

October 18th, 1831, was a languid autumnal day, when the heat of summer seemed to exude in tepid moisture from the earth and promote a sweating languor of body.

Luigi Rivoli was travelling from Cardozza to Bores. His distaste for the country was not lessened by the discomforts of the day, and of the public conveyance by which he travelled.

Five miles from Bores the coach was held up by a hither-

to unsuspected band of bandits, who did the work of levying an enforced contribution on the passengers with speed and skill, betraying unusual clemency in their demands and disappearing as swiftly and inexplicably as they had come, plus a neat sum of money (which was unaccountably returned to the authorities a few week later) and one traveller, whose absence was not remarked till the coach lumbered into Bores itself. He had not booked a seat and it was concluded that in some way he was connected with the outrage. No one was greatly concerned over his fate.

Luigi Rivoli, however, found it a matter of vast concern. He had been cleverly hustled into the centre of the group of bandits, suddenly shrouded in a thick cloak, and dragged across a horse in front of a man whose vice-like grip on him ensured him at least a safe seat!

They rode long and fast before they halted. His wrists were now secured and the cloak still more firmly fastened about him. No heed was taken of his muffled attempts to speak. Again they rode for what must have appeared hours to him. Rivoli was stiff and sore, and a great deal shaken by the time his captors reached their destination.

The last part of the journey had been up-hill and rough going, he judged.

He was not a man to lose his nerve in any predicament, but he entertained no idea that his release would be a mere matter of ransom. His personal enemies were many and, though he could not conceive how they had known of this journey, his capture was proof positive that they did, and it only remained to learn who were the captors.

He was going to Bores to see a man who had perfected a method of measuring the weakness and strength of the sensory nerves. About a month ago this man had written to him saying he had read a small *brochure* Rivoli had published on that subject, and he would like to submit his ex-

periments to him but unfortunately he was an invalid and could not travel. Would it be possible that he could receive the honor of a visit? The man's credentials were good, his account of his experiments interesting, and Rivoli decided to go.

The uncomfortably muffled man had plenty of food for thought. Between times he listened intently for speech between his captors. He could hear the hoofs of a second horse, but the riders never exchanged a word. The horse on which he sat must have been a powerful beast to sustain the double weight. He began to review the geographical position of Bores with regard to the residence of possible enemies. It lay to the north of Cardozza, on the road leading to the mountain province of Orensē, whose frontiers were, indeed, within twenty miles of the town.

Orensē! Rivoli knew now what he was up against and the knowledge did not increase his peace of mind!

Therefore, when the journey ended and he was dragged from the saddle, hustled into some building and released from the cloak, he was not surprised to find Count Raphael d'Arenzano and his two younger brothers facing him.

The building was a hut with an earth floor, an unglazed and at the back, a miscellaneous collection of rubbish—hurdles, iron traps, posts and sacks. In the middle was a table on which sat Count Raphael, tapping his boot thoughtfully with a riding-whip. The younger men stood on each side of their prisoner.

Behind them the door stood open, showing a wooded mountain side and through the stems of the trees one caught a glimpse of bigger mountains across a rocky desolate gorge. The warm sun filtered through the pines, and their scent filled the air, which was invigorating and pure after the overripe moisture of the lowlands.

Rivoli looked round expectantly. Prince d'Arenzano was not there.

Suddenly Count Raphael lifted his head, as if he had only at that moment perceived his prisoner, and he swept his hat off with an ironical bow.

"Your pardon, sir. Cardozza is so crowded a place that it is difficult to find opportunity for private discussion, so we have taken this method of securing the same."

"Whatever is the purpose of this outrage, Count, I can assure you I would have offered you ample opportunities for private conversation without it!"

Count Raphael's eyes brightened. Good! The man was going to show fight after all!

"We have never got very far on such occasions as you have provided," he said drily; "and indeed there is little to say now, but more to do. My brothers, Count Sylvestro and Count Damien, and your humble servant, desire to convince you of our disapproval of your treatment of Prince d'Arenzano, who has not only the honor to enjoy the confidence of his country but is the Head of our family. You will notice, sir, that we do not bring into question any item concerning your dealings with us as individuals."

"I appreciate your forbearance! Let me point out to you in my turn that you offer no proof that the present situation is not entirely the outcome of personal pique!"

"No proof—but our word," drawled Raphael indifferently. "It is really a small matter to us, so we are satisfied ourselves."

Rivoli spun round on Count Damien.

"Your vows are most recent, and it is generally considered your standard of personal honor is high. It would interest me to know how you reconcile your vows or honor with this situation?"

"You tried to injure a man who had done nothing what-

ever to deserve it," explained Damien fiercely; "and that man is my brother. I vowed personal obedience to an Order which demanded of me a decent personal life, not a system which tortures men into doing its will!"

"And in the name of the Order to which you vowed obedience, I command you to assist me, a defenceless man, against unequal odds!"

Damien shook his head. "You are not the President now. You are just Luigi Rivoli, who tried to injure my brother. The odds will be more equal presently, I hope."

"You lack the support of the famous Council," put in Raphael suavely. "Of those six unknown mummers who sit by you and carry out your will so neatly. What a fool you were, Rivoli, to let me discover that! I swear one of them is an English prize-fighter. He has the trick of that knock-out blow which is peculiarly English. What do you pay him?"

The insolent nonchalance of his voice goaded Rivoli to madness. It was all he could do to keep from flinging himself, bound as he was, on that hated form seated there on the table, mocking him with some diabolical plan lurking in his accursed head.

He turned to the others again—to Sylvestro in particular.

"You talk of my injuring your brother, because I carried out certain orders given me by a higher authority. I repeat —*given me*. Do you know the injury this man here has done me? The infamy he has committed? When you do, you can judge between us. Count Sylvestro, you are a married man now. If you respect your wife you would ——"

Count Raphael's voice cut like a thin steel blade across the hot torrent of his words.

"Surely, sir, you will not drag a lady's name into the business? You cannot be so ignorant of the usages of decent

society as not to know in a little dispute like ours any pretext takes the place of a woman's name!"

"The pretext of an injured brother," sneered Rivoli.

"No!" returned Raphael steadily. "Our private quarrel is between us alone. It has no part in this affair. I have given you opportunities without number to settle it, which you have refused."

"Refused to be assassinated by a man who has already destroyed my happiness! Yes!"

"You are really quite proficient with the sword, sir," was the cold response. "I do not assassinate people."

Sylvestro spoke.

"Let's get on, we are wasting time."

He was not in the least anxious to hear of Rivoli's personal grievance with his brother. He had no illusions about Raphael.

"Quite right, Baby, we waste time. Well then, sir. We three constitute ourselves champions of the head of our family; indeed by our oath of allegiance we are bound to do so. We consider you have unwarrantably inflicted suffering on Prince d'Arenzano."

Quick as lightning Rivoli got in a stroke.

"Five hours in a quite clean dry room—in the dark!"

"And therefore," pursued Raphael, as if he had not spoken, though his eye narrowed and hardened, "we propose you should meet us one after another in open fight. If you come out of it alive, we shall not be in a condition to grudge you your victory, and will ensure you means of escape and complete immunity."

"In plain words, having decided to murder me, you want to get some amusement out of it first."

"I really do not mind how you put it," returned Raphael, indifferently; "so long as it comes off."

"It won't come off so far as your amusement is con-

cerned," Rivoli said sharply. "You can kill me as I stand, a bound man—three to one—but I should be a fool to lend you any assistance."

"Upon my word, I don't know that it would not be the least trouble in the end."

Damien started forward. "Raphael! No! He has to fight. That was my condition."

"All right. Don't get excited. He'll fight," put in Sylvestro, soothingly.

"He will not fight; not with that damned scoundrel standing there!" said Rivoli.

"Then let's leave Raphael out of it," cried Damien quickly. "If he's really got a personal grudge against him, it's more decent."

"Viper!" murmured Raphael, with a little smile. "I meant to have first turn."

"I am better than Sylvestro anyhow and it isn't fair to match us when he's tired."

"What sort of chance do you leave me?" grumbled Sylvestro. "Anyhow I think you are right about Raphael."

"Baby, what ingratitude!" mocked Raphael, whose half-veiled eyes never left their victim's face.

"Well, it is more decent," insisted Sylvestro.

Raphael laughed.

"Dear Baby! More decent! What is decent in this world?"

"Very little," put in Rivoli quietly. "Especially where Count Raphael's footsteps pass. I am sorry, gentlemen, to disappoint your hopes. I decline to fight, and you must instead decide amongst yourselves who shall be the murderer, since you draw so nice a distinction."

Raphael got off the table in a leisurely fashion.

"It's a question of time then. I feared as much!" He

pushed the table aside. Behind it was a post some five feet high, deeply imbedded in the ground.

"He needs time to consider the matter. Damien, you are a good hand at knots. Bring him along."

Rivoli was securely fastened to the post with ropes well-knotted, so as to secure him beyond hope of freedom and yet not to injure his circulation.

"I daresay you'll see another side to the question to-morrow," remarked Sylvestro; "but it would be much more sensible to come to terms now."

"Terms!" He was sick at heart, but he forced a courageous face to his foes.

"You know you really have a fine reputation with the foils," Damien insisted, reprovingly. "I should have thought your life worth fighting for. We'll make Raphael promise to let you go free if you beat us."

"He would give his word, I suppose!" scoffed Rivoli. "You young fools! I tell you I shall not fight. I tell you something else: if you kill me you have not done with the Guild of St. Augustine, very far from it."

"The famous Seven!" sneered Raphael.

"All this because Prince d'Arenzano does not like the dark!"

It was madness to make that taunt. All three faces grew black and threatening. They never spoke between themselves of this queer weakness of their brother, but it was for them a sacred tradition bound up with the memory of their mother and no subject for profane lips.

Neither of the three, knowing something of the man's power and vindictive spirit, would set him free now to wreak his vengeance on the one they would protect. Raphael with great difficulty had forced himself to tell them of the terrible hours after Prince d'Arenzano's imprisonment in the crypt, and how he firmly believed that such another experience

would injure Paul's finely adjusted brain. He, Raphael, had forced himself to speak of it, and they, knowing their Raphael, had learned more by that significant fact than by his actual words. They were fighting to preserve not only their brother's honor but his reason, not only his bare life but his very soul. If one seeks excuse where by all usages of modern civilization there are none, it lies here—that such was their honest aim and actual belief.

Rivoli had gauged rightly: neither of the two younger men would kill him in cold blood, but he did not appreciate the ends to which they would go to force a sword into his hands.

They left him there bound in the hut. They warned him that shouts were of no service, owing to the remoteness of his prison.

The door had a mere light latch. Raphael, who was the last to leave, examined it.

"I doubt if that would keep a wolf out; one that knew its own mind," he remarked thoughtfully as if to himself. The others had gone on. "I know there are one or two in these parts. We ought to have thought of that before. But perhaps they won't find you. It would upset our plans if they did."

He smiled as he spoke, looking at Rivoli with that venomous side-glance that many men had feared.

The hate between them was evenly balanced. The remorse which Raphael still felt for his crime against Maria Lais died down to ashes in the presence of Rivoli, and in some twisted odd way he was sick with anger that it should be so. Some horrible secret knowledge of relationship of soul, or community of mind, which understood the dark workings of his enemy formed a link between them. If Raphael mistrusted Rivoli's dealings with Paul, it was largely because of this hateful knowledge of Rivoli's nature.

That little touch concerning the wolves was in Rivoli's own spirit and he expected him to recognize it as such, but Rivoli did not. He cursed him long and silently, as silence and solitude slipped down the mountain side and imprisoned his mind, as the hut and ropes imprisoned his body.

III

It was no use. He could not think or plan or construct any means to liberate even his mind from the thraldom of solitude and fear!

The day slid into dusk, dusk rushed into night. He fell to hoping that Prince d'Arenzano had felt some of the torture he endured, when he had left him free and unbound in his cell! He would be wiser next time.

Not to move when the darkness all round one moved! That was a sensation he had never properly imagined. Outside in the forest there were noises which seemed to increase the silence. Little shuffling sounds, breaking twigs, the cry of owls, and then—distant but unmistakable—another cry. He held his breath and counted. It came again a little nearer, and a stealthy footfall on the pine-needles.

Cold sweat broke out on his face. He could not breathe. He would gladly have held his breath in death at that moment. Then the cry came again right under the window. He felt the stilling of his heart.

The door shook—and Raphael entered.

He was still tied but lying on the ground, and damp with water, when he recovered himself. Water was also being held to his parched lips and he drank greedily. A guttering candle in a lantern revealed the door open against a profound blackness without. It was profound for a moment, then he discerned a star twinkling over the trees. His senses

returned entirely; he recognized Count Raphael bending over him with a look of supreme satisfaction.

"After all, my friend, the dark isn't very pleasant?" he remarked, standing up and shaking himself. "That's enough water, you mustn't spoil your appetite for the excellent meal you will have, when you brace yourself up for a fight! Am I not an angel in disguise? I remembered we had left you no water, and travelled all this way to bring it to you!"

"The door's open." He forced out the words with an effort.

"Yes, I thought it more airy—Oh, wolves!" he laughed. "So you believed me? I am quite a professional, am I not? Listen!"

He gave out again the unspeakably dreadful cry of a hunting wolf. Rivoli shivered from head to foot, and impulsively tried to rise.

Again Raphael laughed with vicious content.

"There are no wolves here outside the barrier. I was only giving you a little excitement."

If the eyes that glared at him could have thrust unutterable torture on his soul, he would have been in hell.

Maria Lais, the capture, the taunts, all he had endured at this man's hands, were nothing beside the supreme injury of ghastly, torturing, unnecessary fear!

Presently he was alone again.

IV

There was a little clearing in the forest not far from the hut, forming a kind of shelf on the mountain-side, and here Rivoli found himself and his three jailers in the fresh morning air, with the sun pleasantly warming his chilled limbs. He was free now. He recognized that his chance of escape was *nil* in these mountain fastnesses, which were familiar

ground to his enemy and an unsolvable riddle to himself. He sat on a rock, haggard-eyed, dishevelled but self-possessed.

The agony of the night was gone except for its irascible memory.

On the ground before him lay two or three swords; beautiful weapons of finely tempered steel, one of which was at his disposal. He folded his arms and leaned back and watched his enemies.

He still refused utterly to fight. He pointed out to them that starvation only increased the measure of their crime.

Three fighters to one starving man!

He had reiterated the absurd odds, with one eye on Damien, who fidgetted under it. Sylvestro, on the other hand, argued with him on the folly of not taking the best of the odds and the unsportsmanlike spirit he was showing. Raphael said nothing, but whenever Rivoli shifted his eyes, he encountered the mocking, insolent stare of the other—never wavering, never changing. He knew in his heart that whatever he might do against those other two, Count Raphael did not mean to leave him on the mountain-side alive.

Rivoli indeed saw the impossibility of it from the Count's point of view. He was merely playing, minute for minute, buoyed up with some irrational hope that somehow in the end he might foil the purpose of the man he hated. It was that which he cared for, beyond the mere saving of his own life. He was no coward save in that one dark hour of unnecessary fear, and he would have met either one of these men with a decent show of spirit, but he could not have done himself even the shadow of justice with those eyes watching and waiting, confident in their deadly purpose; so he met taunt with taunt, and scorn with scorn, and unreasonable hope lived on.

Suddenly, without warning, Raphael rose and stood over

him, and in his hand there was the keen hunting knife of his race.

"See," he said quietly; "I have no objection at all to killing you as you sit there, though my brothers have. You've abused your position; you're a danger to society, and you've injured the Prince—reasons enough. But since you are afraid of steel, I'll do this. We'll get two pistols and load one; you shall have first choice and we'll fire together. If Fortune favors you, you shall go free. They"—with a nod at his brothers—"shall swear it to me, on condition that you also swear that the matter shall end here, and that you leave my brothers alone in future."

"And suppose I am merely wounded?" scoffed Rivoli.

Count Raphael shook his head.

"If Fortune gives me the loaded pistol, you won't be wounded. I can promise you that."

There was a rustling sound in the woods behind them, the slithering of a horse on the pine-needles, and a big form hurled itself in their midst. The hunting knife was wrested from the Count's hand.

Rivoli got to his feet and subsided again.

The other three stood stupefied a moment, staring at the Prince, who—panting and shaking—looked from one to the other, with fierce hard eyes.

"Are you my brothers or a band of cut-throats?" he demanded sternly, but his voice was dry and choking.

"It was to be a fight, a fair fight!" said Damien swiftly, a challenging light in his eyes. "He had only to choose his sword."

"He would have fought in time," said Sylvestro. "I would to God, Paul, you had stayed away one hour longer, for now none of us will go safely any more!"

The Prince's eyes turned to Raphael, who replaced his knife in his pocket and then spoke with sharp decision:

"You cannot interfere, Paul. It is our affair. We shall not murder the man; but Sylvestro is right. If we let him go now, our three lives won't be worth a day's purchase. I've offered him new terms. I think he meant to take them."

"He will not take them," said the Prince quietly.

"Paul, you have no right here, and you have no right to set him free! The others came into it because I made them. You dare not risk it!"

He flung himself suddenly between the Prince and Rivoli.

"For Heaven's sake, think what you are doing, Paul!"

"Stand aside, Raphael, and let the man go."

"I will not!"

"It is a Command!"

The words rang out sharply like the clear report of a pistol. For a moment Raphael hesitated, his hand fell and then stiffened again; he held his ground:

"I refuse to take it, Paul!"

With one swift movement the Prince caught him by the arms and held him. His enormous strength might have been tried to the uttermost, for the Count's muscles were like fine steel, but he made no struggle. He bent his head, with bitter anger in his heart.

"Sir," said the Prince, addressing Rivoli; "you are free. There by the hut is my horse. Ride to the top of the hill and you will see a pile of stones to the right and a track. If you follow it, you will come to Maila. It is eight miles off. The coach passes there. Leave the horse at the inn."

He loosed his hold on Raphael, who turned sharply away, and stood staring down the precipitous hillside.

The Prince went on. "You should be in Cardozza to-night. My brothers will return to Arenzano with me. If you are wise the matter will end here. The Society," he laid a faint accent on the word, "is not in a very healthy condition.

Take care a strange physician does not have to be called in. See him started, Damien."

Rivoli walked by them without a word, but at the edge of the clearing he looked back at them all four, each watching him silently and without movement. He might have been printing an indelible picture of each on his mind. He looked longest at the Prince, but there was no gratitude in his eyes. Behind his mask-like face, they felt the register of the last twenty-four hours was entered for payment in indelible ink!

Then he went towards the hut, and Damien followed him.

V

The four were alone again on the little level plateau; the sun still warmed it and the pines incensed it, and the voice of the forest was like a lullaby, but none of these things touched the consciousness of the four—Sylvestro, seated on a rock, philosophical but disappointed; Damien, grave but relieved; Raphael, sullen and brooding, standing there over the steep declivity; the Prince listened till the last faint sounds of the horse's movements ceased.

Presently he spoke. His voice was steady and firm, and full of reproach. But it was reproach levelled at the beloved, and he spoke in the old *patois* and in the old form of speech which left them silent and submissive.

"What is this thing you have done, oh, sons of the House! To waylay an enemy and snare him to his death is the way of brigands, not of the Princes d'Arenzano! Now you have made of him an implacable enemy, for he is a man without grace, a man of the Shades."

"He was dangerous before."

The interruption was from Raphael, spoken half under his breath. The Prince turned to him.

"Yes, but not as now. Yet, thank God and the saints

that I was in time to save your honor from so black a mark; better a hundred foes than that our name should be coupled with brigands!"

Damien spoke, his beautiful face burning under the quiet accusation.

"It was meant to be a fight. He can fight. I've seen him in the *salle d'armes*. We could not know he was a coward."

The Prince shook his head.

"No coward, Damien, but he has too clever wits for you."

Sylvestro spoke.

"He had a good sporting chance which he never allowed to others; he is a triple dyed brute."

"Granted, but I would not have my brothers learn from his code. Oh, I know," he went on passionately and with deep feeling, "I know it was for my sake you did this. I understand. You have stood much yourselves. You only found the unbearable point reached when it was—another!"

"No—*you!*" said Sylvestro stoutly.

Paul put his hand on his shoulder.

"I know, Baby; I recognize it. I thank you all!" His eyes strayed to Raphael, still immovable, and with his back to them. "But I must stand or fall by my own weakness. God forbid it should prove a curse to other of the House than myself! But I shall not fall. I hope to sever my connection with the Guild."

Raphael laughed—just a little scornful laugh. The first evidence that he had heard what had passed.

It was Damien who spoke.

"Will that be permitted?"

The Prince hesitated. If only he could tell them of Savola and Savola's offer! But his word was given. His personal word which counted more than many vows. If he had spoken and taken on him that slight dishonor, would the sacrifice have pushed back into the shadow of the unrealized

the Fate which was now to engulf them? That Fate, shaped first by the deed of the man who had just laughed, and who would have sold his honor easily to save his brother's bare life!

The Prince permitted himself to say:

"I think I can get freedom for us all. It depends whether we pay the price, or the country."

"If the country?"

Raphael questioned but did not turn.

The Prince's face was graver still.

"The country must not pay. Our bills are our own! I will not jeopardize a single item of my programme. To show weakness now is to fail. But a time will come when I can afford even to fail! Come back with me now. We stay at Arenzano the night, and return to Cardozza to-morrow."

"How did you know?" questioned Sylvestro, suddenly.

Again the Prince paused.

"I had information sent me. Rivoli is not the beginning and end of the Guild of St. Augustine, you know."

The two younger men were startled.

Raphael said with a sneer:

"The Council of Seven again?"

"No, the Head of the Order. Have you all forgotten Savola?

Raphael wheeled round:

"What! That old scarecrow?"

"He is the Head of the Order." He spoke drily and significantly.

Sylvestro whistled, and picked up the swords lying on the open sun-dried patch. The sun had been turning them into white arrows of brilliance that dazzled the eyes.

"That settles it," remarked Sylvestro. "It seems to me we were after the wrong man."

VI

Three days later Prince d'Arenzano entered the big library in the Orensē Palace, which was the general sittingroom of the three brothers. Its sole occupant was Count Raphael. He looked up as his brother entered and glanced at the clock. It was one a. m.

"I could not send you word," said the Prince. They had had an engagement. "I have news which ——" He paused.

"Bad news, I suppose!"

"I think so. Savola is dead!"

The two looked at each other.

"And Luigi Rivoli reigns in his stead?"

"I suppose so."

He began walking to and fro. Raphael watched him curiously.

"You cannot get free now?"

"No."

"I take it you had a hold of some kind over Savola?"

"Simply that he required me for his plans, and I had an impression that he liked me."

"And Rivoli does not!"

"I scarcely imagine it. In one way it's a relief. Savola was a man of vast ambitions. Even if Rivoli inherits them, he does not inherit the capacity for carrying them out. Savola was a danger to Europe, Rivoli is a possible danger to Romanzia."

Raphael smiled languidly.

"Why not crush the Society?"

His brother came to a standstill and looked at him.

"I have considered that. It would be like attacking a hornet's nest. It contains as many friends as enemies. Internecine warfare at this point is damnable. I think, on the

whole, that Rivoli will have the sense to keep quiet. I shall leave him alone. After all, I gave the man his life."

Raphael got up and stretched his long limbs.

"Yes, exactly what I was thinking. I'd rather stand in my own shoes than yours. Good-night."

At the door he paused, and looked back. His eyes were sombre.

"I regret, Paul, I deeply regret you made Rivoli a present of his life. It was too generous!"

Savola was given a magnificent funeral, which was attended by every member of the Guild who could be present, the d'Arenzanos amongst them.

The outer economies of the Guild appeared unchanged, but as months stole on Prince d'Arenzano's prophecy appeared justified. He and his family were left in peace. The political horizon again cleared, and, little by little, the Prince regained his sense of security.

It was a false security. The hate in Rivoli's heart was unassuaged, and his lust for revenge quickened in silence. His was the cunning of patience, the cold, calculating hate that could bide its time.

He was free now. Heir to his uncle's schemes if not to his ambitions, and with the ears, eyes, and hands of his secret organization at his service.

This Secret Service which Rivoli inaugurated was probably the finest on earth.

CHAPTER XIII

THE DUCHESS OF ALQUARTO

IN the south of Romanzia lies the Province of Alquarto, leaning out towards the sea in languorous embrace—beautiful with the beauty of the south, with gently rounded contours, wooded slopes, still lakes and peaceful valleys. Inhabited by an ignorant people, whose simplicity was twisted with a very innocent guile, and who were almost childlike in their dependence on their Duke for all that pertained to them of good or evil.

There was no Duke, however, in 1832. Duke Ferdinand had died in 1828, and his beautiful daughter Adrienne reigned in his stead, Duchess in her own right; a gracious dispenser of bounty to her simple people when it struck her to be so.

She lived at Alquarto itself in a fairy palace on Lake Lavelli, which some past ruler of her house had built. A palace of soaring towers and airy balconies, of stately terraces and graceful colonnades, of gardens famed through Europe—a very gracious residence of a most gracious Lady.

She seldom left it. Cardozza held no attractions for her. She visited Torenza, the capital of her province, from time to time, but mostly she preferred being mistress in her own

home, very much mistress of every mood, whim, and desire. It was perhaps fortunate that her whims were of sufficiently decorous a pattern to excite no comment in a censorious world. She was well chaperoned and companioned by a certain Mme. Ortez, for whom she entertained a mild, if sincere, affection.

The two led a harmless existence in a charming routine of small duties and pleasures, which took on themselves a magnified importance for lack of comparison. The Duchess, following the traditions of her family, patronized the Arts, cultivated her mind to an unusual extent, and occasionally entertained a rising poet or painter, and gave her emotional nature outlet in spasmodic outbursts of charity, or in a passing devotion to religious observances, or to dreams of which she spoke to no one.

The Count and Countess Monterael, who had known her from childhood, lived in Torenza, which was distant some fifteen miles from Alquarto. The excellent Countess troubled much over the young Duchess. She did not approve of the companionship of poets and musicians and also she did not approve of her wasting her youth in spinsterhood.

In the early winter of 1832 she induced the Duchess to pay her a visit at the Villa Monterael, on the outskirts of Torenza, where at her husband's desire she was preparing to entertain some distinguished guests.

II

The Duchess maintained a long correspondence with her one intimate friend, a Madame Adèle Honoré DeLille, in the voluminous fashion of her day. This correspondence, without doubt, afforded just sufficient outlet for her emotional nature to enable the young Duchess to present to the world in general a highly decorous and restrained personality. One

doubts very much if even Mme. Ortez was aware of all the fluctuations in her Duchess's mental processes, for she seems to have had some facility in concealing her various moods under a "a mask of right divine." Since no one offered opposing moods, her own became but a gracious procession that called for little comment, and she was in essence a joy-loving soul, and a worshipper of beauty almost to the verge of paganism. The friendship between her and Madame DeLille was very real, very loyal, and very valuable.

The first letter of immediate interest to us was written on the first evening of her arrival at the Monteraels. The recipient apparently lived in Tours, and was a young widow, which is practically all we know about her.

"Beloved Friend,

"Here I am in strange surroundings which engender loneliness of spirit, so I turn instantly to you to relieve my isolation. I am dressed and ready to descend when such descent can no longer be avoided; though to you I may confess I am seized with confusion at the idea of facing so great a company of people, distinguished, alas! in matters so far removed from my knowledge and tastes. What know I of politics and diplomatic relations? In truth, my dear Adèle, I begin to fear I am mistaken in coming. At Alquarto at least I live in the shadow of Romance, but my few excursions into the outside world have not brought me into touch with the reality. Apart from that, the political activity of my host and hostess rather alarms me. You know how thoroughly I share my dear father's views that it is derogatory for any of the Romanzian Nobility to meddle with politics. I cannot understand these people who have flung away the traditions of their fathers and descended into the common arena to fight for what is theirs by right divine. The Chief Minister himself is here, I understand. How my father used

to sigh over the spectacle of a d'Arenzano descending to such practices! You will scold me, I know, in your kind way—it is, I think, the only point on which we do not see eye for eye.

"January 23.

"I hasten to finish the epistle begun last night and interrupted by the summons to descend. What a joy to have some one to whom I can confide my impressions, and thus clarify my own views! I believe that fear of disappointment and boredom had made me more diffident than usual. My knees actually shook, when I entered a room which seemed full of people all talking busily; and then some one saw me and at once, it seemed to poor me, all the rest turned and looked at me, except my hostess, who was far away with her back to me. I could not but consider that they showed a lack of good manners. The babel of tongues ceased and I stood paralyzed by the silence, and on the verge of seeking shelter behind Madame Ortez's ample person. Luckily, I was saved from disgrace by a tall young man who called the Countess's attention to me. My rescuer was immediately introduced and proved to be no less than Prince d'Arenzano himself. With him was his brother Count Raphael.

"My romantic chronicles, dear Adèle, have not lied to me in one respect. These two men in appearance fulfill all the expectations in which one can indulge. However, it is only too likely that their charming appearance and manners, and the high intelligence of their conversation, will prove only a more becoming mask than usual to that cynical spirit I find on every hand and which, as you know, so chills my desire for intercourse with others. How my father would have rejoiced at the opportunity of voicing his indignation to this young man that he should have dimmed his untarnished name in the mire of politics! Yet I confess there seemed *little dimness* about him."

Apparently further intercourse with the new world satisfied the young Duchess that it was warmly alive and open to enthusiasm and generous belief, and that her ideas and fancies, if she chose to voice them, were received neither with contempt nor ridicule. One can imagine her impulsive nature opening as a rose in the warmth of the sun. Her hostess seems to have been greatly pleased with her success; one suspects an ulterior motive in the invitation. The Countess frankly lamented the young Duchess's unwedded state.

But Adrienne herself was at first totally innocent of any such designs. She continues to record her impressions of life and especially of the two young men; and from the careful, wary questions in her friend's letters, we may presume that the latter realized more clearly than the Duchess that there were possibilities ahead.

It is quite impossible, even after the closest examination of the correspondence, to discover which of the two men the Duchess at the outset preferred.

She writes one day:

"I am lost in admiration of the Prince d'Arenzano's wide outlook. He said to me to-day with passionate fervor, 'If I could make the women of Romanzia listen to me, half my work would be done.' "

Further on she says:

"You must not imagine the Prince to be always serious. He is between times delightfully witty and amusing, and quite young. He has a sense of humor which is sometimes beyond me. He can, I find, afford to laugh at himself. We danced last night and he flung himself into the enjoyment of the evening as if no such thing as the serious matter of government entered his head. And when we had finished one figure, he said to me quite abruptly: 'Do be very nice to the French Ambassador, Duchess, I want him kept in a good humor till I've done with him!' I think he saw my surprise

for he laughed and apologized, saying: 'Life was all such a big game we had not time to distinguish between business and pleasure.' I asked him if he really knew which was which, and he said quite quickly: 'Yes, it is real pleasure to convert an antagonist into a friend—it is business to convert a diplomatic friend into an ally.'

"Before I thought what I was saying, I said: 'But I am not an antagonist, Prince!' Was it not dreadful, Adèle? Why should I have assumed he was alluding to me? He then took me to task for objecting in my heart to his work. I was forced to defend myself and in the end he demolished all my theories. I am wondering what arguments my father would have found to defeat his logic."

Her remarks on Count Raphael betray an equal sense of attraction. His understanding, his wit, and that amazing charm that was still his when he cared to exercise it, would have ensnared a far less susceptible heart than the Duchess Adrienne's. Moreover, he at least appeared to treat her seriously.

She writes:

"Count Raphael strikes me as more interested in the feminine outlook and, I think, appreciates better than his brother the value of beauty in life. People speak strangely of him behind his back, even the Countess seems inclined to listen to foolish tales; but I am not so ignorant as not to know that men are beset with many temptations of which we know little, and from which, perhaps, we alone can protect them, if their nature requires assurance of higher things."

Again, in answer apparently to some inquiry, she writes:

"I hardly know how to answer you. In the Prince's company I forget myself—I feel myself, as it were, submerged in a larger personality; while the Count on the contrary makes me tremendously aware of myself in every aspect.

"The Prince has been absent for two days in Cardozza,

but returned last night. During that time I saw very little of the Count."

Probably at this stage, in what was evidently a double courtship, Count Raphael was honestly playing the game, and taking no advantage that could not be fairly shared with his brother. One can imagine the interest and under-current of excitement in the Villa Monterael for the possibilities must have been apparent to all.

Then fate intervened and hastened—or maybe hindered—events by a catastrophy and Adèle in Tours must have had some anxious days, for the next letter she received was dated February 9th, quite a long interval at that period of their correspondence; and it was headed 'Alquarto.'

"My beloved friend,

"I can hardly credit the assurance of my mirror that the last few days have not added years to my appearance. Here I am in my own house with Prince d'Arenzano ill in bed and Count Raphael and his man in attendance. Poor Madame Ortez is distracted at the situation.

"It was on the morning of January 9th. that a message came to me saying that there had been a mining disaster at Sarnie; an immense fall had occurred and some eight or nine men were entombed. I resolved to return home at once, not in hope of doing any good but as a mark of respect to the families of the unfortunate men. Prince d'Arenzano was with me when the message arrived and such was the whirlwind of his helpfulness and his certainty of my course of action that within half an hour I found myself starting off to Sarnie in a carriage, without luggage, without Juliette, without Madame Ortez, all of whom I had apparently ordered to follow me. Count Monterael drove with me and the Prince and his brother, who both insisted on coming, rode on either side. When we arrived at the tragic scene at

the pit head, I began to wonder what possible good I could do there.

"Count Monterael and I stood among the crowd of weeping, wailing women and wild looking men, unable to do more than assure them that all that could be done should be done. The poor things seemed to think I had some magical power, for they crowded round and tried to kiss my dress—it is now unusable! I would like to have gone home but I could hardly leave my escort in such an unpleasant position, and they were discussing the possibilities of a rescue party. I tried to convince them that it is always considered impossible to rescue men after an explosion and a big fall. I told them what my father always said on such sad occasions, 'There is nothing to be done but bow to the inscrutable decrees of Providence!' Count Raphael laughed and said, 'I think I will risk the decree and presume to impose a human providence! Those men have to be got out if they are alive!'

"I still protested and he turned his back on me. The Prince said that I must allow them to be responsible for their own actions.

"I had just to sit there in the miserable squalor and dirt and wait. After what seemed an age the cage came up with eight men, none of whom were seriously hurt, but neither the Prince nor Count Raphael were with them. They said a fresh fall had occurred just as they thought they were in safety and they had rushed on and had not noticed that the noble gentlemen were not with them.

"No entreaties would induce them to go down again. Not even my most solemn commands! Dr. Croce spoke of the decrees of Providence but it sounded very unconvincing now. I *could* not believe that heaven meant those two splendid brothers to perish. At last just as I had made a last storming protest—yes, Adèle, I *stormed* at them—the bell clanged and the cage was hurriedly loosened. Dr. Croce went down in

it. It seemed another dreadful age before it reappeared with the three of them. The Count, his face covered with blood and grime, was supporting his brother, who semed to be horribly hurt and moaning with pain. But when he saw me he tried to smile and wave his hand. I turned sick and faint and sank on a heap of coals and hid my face. Presently Count Monterael persuaded me to go home and the manager's wife went with me, since I had neither maid nor Madame Ortez. He told me that the Prince's thigh was broken. I left word that the Prince and his brother were to be brought to Alquarto as soon as they could be moved and that they were to consider everything as their own. How splendid they are!

"No, my beloved Adèle, books of Romance have not lied to me. It is lovely to know it!

"This morning they brought the Prince here with the great surgeon that Dr. Croce summoned from Torenza. I took care to be out of the way when they arrived, indeed, to be frank with you, I locked myself in and hid my face in the sofa cushions, and tried not to imagine what he must endure in being moved. Ah, if only you were by my side!

"It is strange to think I have never hitherto been faced with any emergency more pressing than the misconduct of a servant or the failure of my dressmaker. I should not like to contemplate a return to such a monotonous existence."

The Duchess need have had no apprenhension. For the next few years her life was more eventful than she desired and Romance inundated her soul till out of disastrous tragedy she found her way again into peaceful ways of a more placid existence.

The Prince lay helpless for a few weeks with a broken leg. It necessitated much coming and going of couriers and secretaries, and occasionally important Ministers, for after the first few days he was able to see to business, and it was

no time for him to disappear from the political arena. Nothing but his dread of an imperfect mend kept him in bed, but with that alternative prospect before him he accepted the situation, commandeered his brother's services and continued, from the placid shore of Lake Lavelli, to rule Romanzia. He wrote grateful little notes to the Duchess, but was less troubled than was Raphael at the change he effected in her quiet household. What secretly did trouble him a good deal more was the fact that his brother had a great deal too much time to spend in the Duchess's company.

For Prince Paul d'Arenzano had at last fallen in love. He had suspected it at Torenza; at Alquarto, even though debarred the sight of its lovely owner, he knew it beyond mistake. He neither analyzed her charms, nor reasoned over his state. He was in love; so soon as he could be moved he would leave her house, return to Arenzano, make certain arrangements, and then ask for her hand. Until he was well, and freed from the obligation under which he lay, his lips were sealed.

He never spoke of his intentions to Raphael directly, but he believed his brother understood and it was not from serious jealousy that he endeavored to employ as much of Raphael's free time as possible, but from the old hidden mistrust of his brother in the company of any woman.

If he had trusted Raphael a little more it would have been better for all. Perhaps the Count, though he was quite aware of Paul's admiration for the Duchess, did not take it as a serious passion. Perhaps he did not wish to do so, for undoubtedly the Duchess's personality appealed to him very strongly. Her beauty intoxicated him. There was something exotic and rare about it, and before many days had passed he was deeply involved in his passion. Yet he may have made desperate attempts to be loyal to his brother; one does not know, for he left no record. There are only the

letters of the Duchess and one or two little notes from the Prince to outline for us that dawning spring by the shore of Lake Lavelli.

The Duchess's letters:

"February 27th.

"My dearest Adèle,

"See, I beseech you, that you can so control circumstances that I may receive you here before this amazing experience is over.

"The anemones are in full flower. I took Count Raphael to see them as they grow there under the olive trees; they are ever a joy to me! Sheets and sheets of red against the young green grass. There was a little wind but not enough to strike chill and we sat on my favorite seat, and he told me a good deal about himself.

"Did I mention to you the letters I have had from the Count and Countess Monterael, all so angry because I will not give up my own house entirely to the d'Arenzanos and go to stay with them till my guests can move. A discourtesy which is unthinkable to me. I am perfectly happy and well able to entertain my guests and take care of myself.

"I received a sweet note from the Prince yesterday, in return for some flowers I sent in to him. I should show it you if you were with me, so I send you a copy. Does he not write deliciously?

" 'Dear and honored Hostess,

" 'You would attempt to reconcile me for the deprivation of your company with a pretty reminder of it. I am happy in the assurance that your kindly thoughts pay me little visits full of healing. Let me apologize many times for the arrival of a courier so late last night. If your rest was disturbed, consider it as an enforced service to your country, and not

the wish of your unfortunate servant, who must bend even the convenience of his friends to the requirements of the Government.

" 'My sincere hopes of a prosperous day to you!

" 'Paul Landuoc d'Arenzano.'

"February 29th. I saw the Prince to-day. We took coffee in his room. I cannot describe to you the sense of security which he gives to me. When I am with him I forget I am the Duchess, I feel but a girl—no, a woman,—who is made to be protected.

"He is looking better than I expected but still rather white and thin. He is allowed a pillow now and owned he was thankful for it. Next week he is to sit up and perhaps the week after he will be able to use his leg and perhaps be able to travel, and then they will go.

"I wrote thus far, and fell to thinking what it will be like when they are gone. I beseech you, come to me before that event happens."

"March 16th.

"My beloved,

"Fate has been cruel to detain you.

"The great adventure has happened and you not here to support me! I must write to you with all haste that you may share my happiness. I am still bewildered and lost before its greatness, even though at present it is a secret between me—and you (I requested that)—and Raphael!

"Can I set it down? It is not memory that will fail me, for surely Time will never dull the memory of that hour.

"We were on the lowest terrace by the lake, and he asked me to walk out into the wood at the end and see the narcissus coming up under the olives. We were neither inclined to

talk much. He had just told me they would be leaving on Friday.

"Then as we stood looking at the narcissus just showing, he suddenly spoke. No, I cannot put it down though it is all written on my heart, each word a golden ladder leading me into Heaven. But just at first I hesitated. A little breeze sprang up and ruffled the surface of the lake, and the narcissus tossed this way and that. Yes, I saw all that, I was alive to all the world. He just waited silently, and I was thinking that if I took the golden, heavenly thing he offered me, there would be sudden winds and even storms to face; that his tempestuous nature, which I knew all along lay under his easy manner, would need care and a harborage—that Alquarto and I meant that for him, as he had said.

"They were tempestuous words he had uttered, not careful, clever phrases. He needed me!

"It takes a long time to write but it flashed on me like that, as I looked at the ruffled lake and the dancing narcissus—and then I looked at him and—it was done! He said nothing else but only kissed me there among the narcissus on the borders of the lake!

"Later he said that he had had no business to speak so soon while they were my guests, that his brother would never forgive him, and he asked me if I would agree to keep it to ourselves till they left, and then he would tell his brother his intentions, and write and be correctly formal, so that the Count and Countess Monterael could have nothing to say against him. So he knows what they do say!

"I got scarlet at the thought, but he said quite humbly that they were right and he wasn't fit to lace my shoe, but he would be; only they should have nothing to bring against him in the first hours of his happiness. I was quite glad to agree, but I made the exception of *you*. He demurred a little but I stood sponsor for your good faith and he gave in. For the

rest I am glad of our secret. I want these few days to ourselves.

"It distresses me to deceive the Prince but Raphael says it would distress him far more to start our engagement with the Prince in anger at his behavior. 'It is bad, my dear beloved,' he owned sadly; 'in truth I did not mean to speak yet, but the sky, the lake, the narcissus, and *you,* were too much for me. Be kind and let me tell Paul my own way.'

"Of course I agreed.

"I will finish this to-morrow. Greatly as I long to share my news with you I am still reluctant to part from it. Can you explain so unreasonable a state of mind, my friend?

"Raphael has gone to Cardozza and will come back to fetch the Prince on Friday with a special carriage. He need not have gone but the pretence is too hard for us—for me, at least. I cannot look at him without betraying myself! Do not think poorly of me; joy is harder to hide than grief. This afternoon I sat with the Prince. I am sure he will not be angry when he knows. He is so good and gentle and it will be lovely to have him as a big brother—the brother I have always dreamed of. . . . . My dear friend, how wonderful is life. You were right after all; it contains all the treasures hearts can desire!"

Three days later:

"My dearest Friend,

"They have gone! I cannot write of it. There is no sun in the sky nor color in the lake, and Alquarto is empty with a great emptiness that makes my heart ache. Only the knowledge of the letters that will come warm the loneliness of life. Tell me, is it always so when Love takes possession? Must I look forward to such bleak anguish with every separation?"

CHAPTER XIV

RAPHAEL'S MARRIAGE

THE Prince went to Arenzano to finish his convalescence and Raphael accompanied him. No doubt because his brother's presence gave him stabs of remorse, Raphael cultivated it the more, for it is fairly clear that he realized he had not "played fair" in the matter of the Duchess of Alquarto. He wrote to her telling her he was on the point of speaking to the Prince and the next letter should be the formal request for her hand—'her dear hand, while her heart was his already and he could not and would not let it go.'

Count Sylvestro and Count Raphael sat in the big hall one evening. They had been shooting and were pleasantly weary with long tramping, and disinclined to seek out the rest of the household. But one of the household—and that its lord in person—sought them out. The Prince came with letters in his hand. He walked slowly still to avoid limping. He had been silent and preoccupied all day. Now he stood staring at the fire a moment and gazing into its blazing heart with a fierce abstraction. Both brothers stopped talking and looked at him curiously.

Presently he looked round. Sylvestro was struck by something new in his face, or rather—as he put it in his idiomatic

manner to his wife: "I never thought before what a confounded beautiful face Fortune's gone and stuck on him!"

"I'm sending a special courier to Cardozza—and Alquarto —to-night," he said quietly. "Do you want to make use of him, either of you?"

Raphael got up abruptly. Sylvestro noticed he was very white, and that he spoke with an effort.

"Yes, I should have something to send by him—and I have something to tell you first, Paul. Perhaps I should have said it before."

The two looked at each other; Sylvestro was aware of strain and stress, and an indescribable fear.

Raphael seemed to wait for a question but none came; Paul just looked at him with knitted brows—perplexed.

"Before we left Alquarto—I—the Duchess, Adrienne, promised to be my wife!"

In all his life Raphael had hardly found speech more difficult. Words seemed but to express a poverty of soul that threatened bankruptcy.

And still the Prince looked at him, and he would not permit his own gaze to fall.

"You asked her while we were still there, her enforced guests?"

"Yes."

"And she accepted you." It was not a question, it was a statement of stupefying fact.

"She did me that honor ——"

"I might have guessed ——" said Paul slowly. "You were free and with her —but—I loved her."

He turned slowly and dropped the letter he still held into the fire.

Then he stood upright again and faced Raphael, and it was not the same face that Sylvestro had half consciously admired a minute ago.

His eyes burned as with sudden fever and his voice, as he spoke, was changed. A force and passion had held both men who listened dumb. Sylvestro indeed could have prayed to be invisible although neither of the other two was conscious of his presence.

"Listen. I myself am hardly fit to take her hand but you, Raphael, are not fit to touch her shoe! I think I could have won her; I know I should have made her happy—but you—forestalled me! Then, remember, I lay this great trust on your shoulders—make her happy. If you fail her—if you cause her one hour of repentance that she gave her fine life into your keeping, then I swear, Raphael, by the memory of our mother and by my hope of salvation, that I will kill you; you shall be to me the enemy for whom is no forgiveness!"

And Raphael, white-lipped, stood before his brother and answered slowly:

"May I be outcast and disgraced if I fail her—but you cannot kill me, Paul—for I am your brother."

The Prince bent his head.

"I have spoken it," he said quietly.

Then he went slowly across the hall with heavy steps, like a man carrying sorrow for a burden, and he looked back at his brother once before he went out. Presently Sylvestro knew Raphael was speaking.

"It is a damnable business, Baby," he said, in an odd thick voice. "I've behaved like myself—but I can't give her up, even to him. Baby, I didn't know, I swear it, that it was like *that* with him."

It was so unlike Raphael to make excuse or seek sympathy that Sylvestro was convinced, at least, of the sincerity of his love for the Duchess. Loyal as he was to Paul, he felt dimly aware that the other brother's soul was entangled in the affair, and that more was involved to him than a mere passing passion for a beautiful woman.

He murmured he supposed it *had* to happen, but it was all cursed bad luck; and presently Raphael went away. Count Sylvestro confided the matter to his wife, and it is from her rather confused record of the affair, with what was known later, that one can in some small way reconstruct the scene.

The Prince had gone the next morning, no one knew where. He left a note for Sylvestro with certain orders, and said he would come back as soon as he had got hold of himself. They were not to worry about him. In spite of the season he may have gone into some mountain region, for his furs and his gun went with him. No one knew, no one ever ventured to ask him, but somewhere in solitude the man with the big heart faced and fought out his bitter battle of renunciation.

Although nearly twenty-nine he had never fallen in love before, at least, never to the extent of facing marriage. He could have brought the woman he adored a virgin affection. He knew he could have won her, given time, and he had to see her pass into the keeping of a man he knew as unworthy and unreliable.

Heaven knows how fierce must have been the struggle, the temptation to set his powerful will against his brother's marriage; to make it, at the least, a cause of abrupt rupture between Raphael and himself, but he was too generous for that.

Ten days later he reappeared at Arenzano: quietly cheerful, outwardly matter-of-fact, ready to face all the innumerable preludes to such a marriage. The possible junction of two such vast estates as Arenzano and Alquarto was not to be entertained. Raphael, in marrying the Duchess, renounced his claims as heir-presumptive to his brother, for himself and his heirs forever. The Prince was nobly generous in the sum he settled on him; but even greater was the generous reception he gave to the Duchess herself, so that the latter

speaks of her great and additional happiness in obtaining a brother as well as a husband!

To clinch all the Prince was his brother's supporter at the actual ceremony, and since Raphael was taken up with his new and amazing passion there was no one with eyes keen enough to discern what measure of pain lay behind this generous dealing.

The following letter turned up long afterwards among a bundle of papers relating to other affairs, which is doubtless how it escaped destruction. It is undated and unheaded as to locality.

"Dear Paul,

"I obeyed your orders and sent in my resignation as Master of the Horse. As I expected, it was refused, and on my insisting, I was asked to retain the place in name only for a short time to avoid the otherwise unavoidable selection of an unacceptable candidate—you can guess who! I could hardly refuse; I think it wisest to leave it so. My duties are at end, that's understood. If the unavoidable candidate can be induced to leave Cardozza, my place can be safely advertised 'To let.'

"I am,

"Your very 'obedient' brother,

"Raphael."

The marriage was celebrated in the cathedral of Torenza and was a particularly magnificent affir. The young Duchess and her husband returned almost at once to Alquarto and there we must leave them for the present to learn much from each other and, on the woman's side at least, to find experience both excelled and fell below the gentle imaginings of her youthful days.

CHAPTER XV

FIRE AND SMOKE

I

AFTER Savola's death, Rivoli found himself heir to plans and intentions which he treated with scorn. They were beyond his grasp, and it angered him to know it. It angered him still more to know that Savola was right and that they would not have been beyond the grasp of the hated Prince d'Arenzano. His sombre jealousy flared again to sullen flame. He might owe the Prince his life, he might in the future regard the debt as "Life for life," but the hate remained; he had no gratitude in his soul and no appreciation of the bigger man. But for those others, that had brought him to the gates of death, had stripped bare his soul, humiliated him and tortured him—with them he meant to settle accounts. There was no room in Romanzia for Luigi Rivoli and the House of d'Arenzano.

The marriage of his arch-enemy had been at first gall to him, but as the weeks went by he ceased to regret it; he would even have welcomed new happiness and new honors, for the higher his enemy climbed, the greater, the more disastrous the fall that would come! He laid his plans. He invoked the goddess of Chance and he waited!

II

The spring is apt to cause a restlessness in the blood and a desire for expansion that need not always be on the side of affection whatever the poets tell us!

The spring of 1833 fonnd Count Raphael at a loose end. Adrienne's expected motherhood interfered with a projected trip to Algiers and Cardozza was also out of the question for her, though not necessarily out of the question for him.

It was Adrienne herself who told him so, half laughing, half pitifully, one evening when the restless fit was visibly master of him.

"You need not stay here just to keep me company," she said with a bigger unselfishness than he could guess. "Adèle DeLille will be charmed to pay us a visit. I have not seen her for three years, and she is my greatest friend. Go to Cardozza, Raphael. Paul will be glad to have you; perhaps you can persuade him to return with you for a visit. He's never stayed here yet!"

But Raphael hesitated. Adrienne's letters make it quite clear that he did not jump at the offer of freedom; it was only after some days of intermittent discussion that he decided to go.

One has to insist on this, because the too general reading of the tragedy is that the Count failed his wife at the most critical time, deserted her for the pleasures of the capital and his old ways of living with heartless infidelity. There is not a shadow of justification for this opinion; all evidence points the other way—that Raphael himself was reluctant to go, oppressed by some vague fear for her and of himself, and only yielded because he thought he served her better so and felt his own restlessness inimical to her well-being.

Prince d'Arenzano was at the time at the zenith of his

first period of power. He had accomplished much in reform and he appeared to be resting on his oars; but he was only gathering strength for still greater measures.

Sylvestro and his wife were at Arenzano, practically ruling there in the Prince's stead, but doubtless under his direction.

Damien had become a full-fledged officer and was taking his profession seriously.

Max, at Arenzano, was happy under the Countess Eunice's charge, growing up with a worshipful adoration of his big brothers, a protective love for his kindly sister-in-law, and a conviction that the world was a very pleasant place when one is eleven years old and of the House of Arenzano, and with Arenzano to live in.

There was no special place for Raphael in the immediate family circle. He paid a flying visit to Arenzano with Paul, but returned to assist at some public function and to pay his delayed respects at Court.

Because his respects were delayed, he was called upon to excuse himself with some show of pronounced friendliness.

The Queen took advantage of his return to remind him that the post of Master of the Horse was still his. She had never formally accepted his resignation, nor had she appointed anyone else, though the unacceptable candidate had gone. Would the Count at least do her the grace to overlook the Royal Stables—her side of them—during his sojourn in Cardozza? One can hear her low, lazy voice flinging the command to him as a request, probably when the King's attention was withdrawn. Quite possibly, he hesitated, and the languid-lidded eyes would narrow; quite certainly a clever taunt would decide the matter.

He accepted the charge.

King Frederick might have been less pleased at the Count's advent than the Queen; Count Raphael paid his

ceremonious respects at His Majesty's Levee and there is nothing official to show that he paid more than his respects at Her Majesty's receptions, but gossip has more to show, and more than one courtly correspondent of the time speak of the Count's reappearance as contemporary with a revival of surprising events and more daring arrangements than had ruled the Court of late.

There were alterations going on at Brantzia, Their Majesties' summer residence; amongst other things, new stables were being built. It was certainly only to be expected that the late Master of the Horse should go down and inspect them—and by no means unexpected in some quarters that Her Majesty should pay a flying visit there too, quite an informal affair, with not more than three ladies and, say, five gentlemen in attendance.

It was not expected, however, by the Court or public that a fire should break out in Brantzia, the second night of the visit, which destroyed a good half of that very beautiful residence.

The fire was extinguished; no lives were lost. The Queen's apartments were sadly damaged but not destroyed. De Parva and Lemora and some others wandered through the blackened corridors, assessing the damage and discoursing on the probable cause. They paused on the threshold of Her Majesty's room. Her Majesty was now safely housed in the King's apartments.

It had suffered as much from water and smoke as from fire. The beautiful appointments were broken, stained and torn. The blackened window made a melancholy frame to the cold dawn.

"A costly business," said de Parva, as they stood on the threshold. He crossed the room; Lemora, following him, stooped and picked up a handkerchief and examined it in the

dim light. It was of the finest linen with a cipher and coronet worked on it. He went across to the window.

"Hangings, carpet, bedding, all ruined," continued de Parva, who had an appreciation of expense.

"Yes, a costly business," Lemora echoed his words thoughfully, and the dawn found an odd light in his eyes.

"Is this yours?" He held out the handkerchief.

The elder man shook his head after a necessary glance.

"No, why do you ask?"

"I found it on the floor there." He indicated the spot.

The two were silent. De Parva held out his hand; hesitatingly Lemora gave him the handkerchief and laughed.

"R. M. A.!" he said lightly. "Let's see, how long has he been married?"

De Parva turned a sickly white. His hand shook a little.

"We've no right," he began and stopped.

The two looked at one another and then away out of the window.

The dawn crept up, chillier and chillier. The earth, shrinking back from its austerity, regretted the comfortable curtains of the night.

Of the two men there, one of them hated the man whose initials were embroidered on the fine cambric, with all the spiteful hate of a mean nature, which had been prompted by a cold contempt; and the other man was a coward, and a man, moreover, incapable of keeping a secret, even in his own interests. The handkerchief could not have fallen into worse hands.

They went out again from the blackened, scarred building. The dawn melted into a grey sullen day, with a bank of clouds in the north-west. The two shivered and drew their cloaks closer. At the eastern entrance a little group of people awaited the arrival of the coaches and carriages, which were to convey the Royal Household to the Duke di

Florence, who had put his house at the disposal of Her Majesty.

Count Raphael returned to Cardozza immediately. He merely waited to see Her Majesty into her carriage.

"I will leave full directions as to the stable alteration," were his final words to the Queen. A lady-in-waiting affirmed afterwards that his voice was deadly cold, almost hostile. "And I think my successor will have no difficulties whatever in taking up my duties."

The Queen answered also coolly. So averred the same lady.

"They have not been very onerous of late. I see no reason for delay—none."

It is little to build on. If it holds a clue at all it seems to point at an estrangement rather than a reconciliaion—the fact of the Count's immediate departure for Cardozza seems to confirm this idea; but from when the estrangement dated —if it existed—is left in darkness.

The story ran its evil subterranean course. Count Raphael naturally heard nothing of it. Then on a sudden town and country were flooded with unstamped news sheets, bearing the tale in merciless uncompromising detail. The page scorned initials, scorned decency, scorned, in places, the truth; but there it was for every eye to read, every evil mind to gloat over—printer, distributor, undiscoverable!

Conceive the outrageous publicity of it, or rather conceive nothing of it. Take it as one must, as a tragic terrible event, a revenge diabolically planned, and remorselessly carried out. If one must think of it, imagine the mind of the man who sat and waited for his moment, with his tools ready—a master fencer—waiting the assured slip in his adversary's guard, waiting, ready, and hate-hungry in his heart!

The leaves fluttered through Romanzia to Alquarto itself, reaching there indeed three hours before the capital was

deluged;—no doubt but the master mind arranged for that! A courier flew from Alquarto to Cardozza, carrying a note piteous in its simplicity:

"Raphael, come to me, and let me with my own eyes know they have slandered our love! Adrienne."

He received it only two hours after the news sheet had been put in his hand.

He neither went nor wrote. Whether he considered the case too hopeless or whether he knew that no lie would clear him in the eyes of his brother, whatever it might do in the eyes of his wife, we do not know. Probably blind fury with himself swallowed up all other sensation and the one sentence that echoed in his ears was, "If you ever fail her—then I will kill you and you shall be to me the enemy for whom there is no forgiveness!"

CHAPTER XVI

WHAT HAPPENED ON AN APRIL MORNING

I

NONE had dared speak to the Prince. They knew the moment his foot crossed the threshold that he had heard and seen.

Count Sylvestro and Carfax were in the library; the former there to meet Carfax whom Fate had landed as a visitor at Cardozza for a brief holiday, at this momentous crisis. Sylvestro had gone out when he heard the Prince's carriage drive up, had seen him go straight up the wide steps to his own room, had essayed to follow, and found his courage fail him; so he returned to Carfax.

One or two of the poisonous leaflets lay on the table. They both looked at them involuntarily, and Sylvestro suddenly caught up one of the most scurrilous and thrust it into the fire, treading it down with his heel, and then, leaning against the high mantelpiece, hid his face in his arms.

Carfax got up, walked restlessly to and fro, and finally stopped by him.

"You must not give in, Sylvestro," he said, huskily. "You will be needed."

At that moment the door opened, and Raphael came in.

Raphael, with his head high and a mocking smile on his lips, but with a look in his eyes that quenched even their fierce anger.

"Well?" he demanded, with a hard little laugh. "Have you not had time to make up your minds what you would like to say to me? I see you have done some reading!"

He indicated the papers on the table.

"Raphael, for God's sake—" began Sylvestro, terror clutching his heart.

Raphael took a step forward with clenched hands.

"Where is he? Where's Paul?" he demanded. He ignored Carfax completely.

"You can't see him, Raphael. Go—go at once! I'll come to you." Then he sprang forward and caught his brother by the arm as he turned to the door.

"No, Raphael, you shall not find him."

"Let go, you fool! Do you think I am afraid of him."

He tried to shake off Sylvestro's grasp.

"You are, if you are not mad!"

With a sudden wrench Raphael flung the other back, the door slammed and he was gone.

The two men left stood listening, almost paralyzed with fear.

Had he really gone?

Sylvestro rushed suddenly to the door.

"He's gone to Paul! Heaven help us all!" he cried, and tore out across the great hall to the Prince's room.

The door at the end of the corridor was ajar. Sylvestro flung it open.

Raphael was against the opposite wall, pinned there by his brother's strong hands at which his own slim white ones, for all their steely strength, plucked helplessly. He was panting strangely, gazing into Paul's eyes, sure that if his gaze shifted those awful hands would slip their grasp to his

throat; and all the time Paul was speaking—a rapid, low torrent of words, terrible, meaningless, mad!

"I warned you, Raphael—it is the dust of Hell. We are choking in it, you and I, and there is no water to lay it! No water, Raphael! Do you hear? It's death that's thirsty for you—as I am!" Mere disconnected raving.

They, Sylvestro and Carfax, caught his arms but his strength was beyond them. Seeing them, however, he turned with a kind of snarl, and from some blank genesis there sprang to Carfax's mind the words:

"The Wolf of Arenzano!"

He cursed them both and made as if he would strike Sylvestro and so loosed his grip on the prisoner.

Raphael slipped under the swinging arm, free, and stood still gasping, and holding the back of a chair, with the room swinging round him in mad gyrations.

But with the cessation of actual contact with his brother Paul's madness relaxed, leaving him, less mad, but tempest-tossed in his own desolate wrath. It was at Sylvestro he hurled these fragments of his passion.

"Damn you! How dare you interfere? Don't you know what he has done? He and his—(He flung an evil word at the Queen.) He's pulled us down to the very slime of Hell—black, black dishonor! And I swore if he caused *her* a heartache I would kill him! Do you think he is to be allowed to live, that mocking devil, who hounds her to death and comes here to boast of it?"

"Go, go, Raphael!" groaned Sylvestro. But Raphael did not move.

"No, by the Name of God, he shall pay, here and now!"

Sudden fury wrenched him back to face Raphael.

"Oh, I'll be more than just! He shall fight! Get me swords, Sylvestro! Quick! It's a command!"

But Sylvestro flung himself between the two!"

"Paul, you don't know what you're saying. You can't fight Raphael! Oh, take him away, some one!" he cried in anguish.

Carfax was powerless and again Paul thrust him aside.

"Can't fight? Why not?" he cried. "It's you who are mad, Sylvestro, to think that white-faced coward is Raphael! Look!"

He swung his arm and struck Raphael across the face, and the blow broke the paralysis of mind and body. Raphael staggered and looked round, as if he only then realized where he was. And he turned to Paul.

"I can't fight you, Paul, and you know it. I am not going to let you kill me!"

His voice was harsh and cracked. He who had known no fear, had been in extremity of fear and was still holding it at arm's length, and measuring the distance between himself and the door, and then some one—he knew later it was Carfax—came between him and that colossal figure of wrath, and he saw the door was open.

He went out, groping blindly; and as he went, he heard or seemed to hear, (for the words could not have actually reached him), Sylvestro talking swiftly and quietly, entreatingly.

"Paul, stop! You are out of control! You shall look at me, Paul. No, there is no one else there—Paul, sit down!"

It struck Raphael vaguely that he had not thought Sylvestro had so much command in him.

He found himself halfway down the long corridor, and Carfax was saying at his elbow, in a hurried insistent voice:

"Where are you going, Raphael? You must tell me."

He stopped and stared at him blankly.

"I—I don't know—yet."

"Promise me to do nothing more mad—more disastrous—

God knows it's awful enough, but *he* must have time to get control. Promise me, Raphael!"

Raphael laughed.

"I'm not quite so mad as Paul," he said queerly. "Probably I'll go to Arenzano!"

He passed out into the night before Carfax could stop him. Carfax went back heavy-footed to the Prince's room. The door was shut now. He waited. It appeared hours before it opened and Sylvestro came out. He closed it behind him and stood swaying a little, and leant against the wall. He did not see Carfax till the latter put his arm round him and said:

"Come along in here, Baby. You've got to hold out!"

He half led and half pushed him into the secretary's room, which was next to the Prince's. It was, of course, empty at this hour, and he thrust Sylvestro into a chair. He went and found some brandy and administered it, standing over him while he gulped it down.. Sylvestro lay back, staring in front of him with a look of utter exhaustion on his face. It was a long time before he spoke.

"He's moderately sane now—sane enough to order me to leave him. He did not ask where—" He choked a little—"where Raphael had gone. Where is he? No, do not tell me. It's safer not to know!"

"I don't know," put in Carfax dryly.

"My God! What's going to happen to us all?" cried Sylvestro suddenly. "I see no way out! Oh, the devil's own hands shuffled the cards when those two fell in love with the same woman!"

He got up and walked up and down like an agitated but sane Paul.

"I can't see the way out, Carfax, publicly or privately. All that seems to matter is to keep them apart till he's sane! Raphael will kill himself—I can't see what else he can do,

or what can prevent it. If he doesn't he can't escape Paul. He still means to fight."

He shivered.

"Isn't it ghastly, Carfax, Paul who's never fought in his life, except as a game!"

"He can't fight him," returned Carfax, roughly.

But Sylvestro made no answer.

II

Through the long hours of the night the Prince sat at his table staring before him. Time raced with his pulses, sank to inertia with his exhaustion, unrecognized, and then—challenged.

In this fallen flaming world there must be some fixed point of reality beside that white face, which loomed up before every spot where a man whose brain was on fire might hope to find a resting-place and some coolness—no dust.

He gave it up at last, that hunt for a resting-place and instead let his fever run its course of hate. Dishonor, disgrace, the downfall of his work! Yes, all that, but behind it, rising and fading, blotting out even that one evil vision, was a picture of Adrienne, frozen with grief, sick to death with the mortal blow dealt her tender young soul, and he able to do nothing to heal her! It was agony such as he had not conceived could be borne with life.

His impotence to help was such torture. Nothing for him to do but exact vengeance! He must sate his soul with that or die! It was the only panacea for the intolerable pain. To escape it he presently rose, walking up and down, cursing Raphael.

He could almost believe he was by his side in the dark night, walking strange ghostly streets, walking at his elbow listening to another voice that whispered evil counsel in the

traitor's ear. Evil, because it meant escape from him—from his righteous vengeance, from the only thing that could assuage the burning pain.

He wanted air and, tearing back the curtains, flung open a window, and looked into the black night.

Eastward! Arenzano was eastward. The purpose of that evil counsel sprang to his brain with a flash.

Raphael would go there! Not to Arenzano itself, even *he* would hardly dare so much, but above the forest there were mountain heights where a man might so easily perish from a false step. His ears held a faint echo of some such talk long ago when the world was not flecked with red patches and white faces.

Eastward the dawn was breaking.

III

There were no red patches or white faces in Raphael's visions, only interminable blackness, void and shapeless.

He found himself at last walking through strange deserted streets and unknown suburbs, making his way mechanically from one dim lamp to another, but otherwise purposeless. He had no idea of the time but was just conscious of overwhelming fatigue and, finding a little empty space with a seat before a low building, that appeared to be an inn, he sat down. The swinging lamp that burned before the door of the building seemed a companion in the lonely darkness.

The April night was cold, and overhead flying clouds hid the stars. A clock in the distance struck one! He must have been walking nearly three hours. It was time to think consecutively.

There was something he had to do though it was so difficult to call it to mind. He did not think of Adrienne at

all. Perhaps it was not possible for even the thought of her to reach him in the depths where he was.

He must find out what it was he had to do.

He had to face the plain facts, as ugly as wounds, and needing as great care.

At last he knew. He had to prevent Paul killing him. Also no one must be able to point to his dead body and say he feared to face the storm he had raised. No, they should not gape at him, neither should Paul refuse him burial with his fathers!

Up in the heights of the mountains above Arenzano there were crevasses, deep slits in the earth's sides where, if a man slipped, God have mercy on his soul!

Who would say as much for him? Not Paul!

He asked for no mercy, for nothing outside the love of the one being who had been his lodestar and hope of salvation throughout his erring life. There was still no thought of Adrienne.

Somehow or other he must get to Arenzano or at least, to the Orensē frontier.

IV

So much must be fairly conjectural, but it is at least certain that, by some means or other, the Count obtained a horse at the inn after midnight, and rode off leisurely into the night, that he arrived about six in the morning at Forresti.

Here he ordered a room and a meal, and apparently decided to rest before attempting the long climb to those far away heights, as he might well do, considering his exhausted condition. None dared comment on his appearance, haggard, unshaven, and still moving as a man in a dream. It is recorded that the landlord ventured to put toilet necessities in His Magnificence's room. But for

his haggard face, he appears to have been rightly attired and duly shaved when he again came down. Even if one intended falling down a crevasse one might do so decently apparelled and properly fed!

It was very characteristic.

V

Sylvestro had flung himself still dressed on his bed and nature had consoled him with a few hours' sleep. He was awakened by Paul shaking him by the shoulder and saying:

"Get up quickly, you must come to Arenzano with me."

The whole hideous scene of the previous night rushed to his mind with pitiless distinction. Arenzano was at least away from Raphael's vicinity, however!

He sprang up.

"I must change. Do we ride?"

"I should founder any horse I crossed," was the grim answer. "I've ordered a carriage. Be quick!"

He went away. Sylvestro joined him in a few minutes. A few bewildered servants were moving about, and a carriage was waiting at the door. Some one insisted on their having coffee. The Prince swore at the delay but drank it. When they were in the carriage, Sylvestro saw at their feet a long narrow case, that was kept in the gallery where they fenced, though it held no more fencing foils. Paul, however, said nothing and Sylvestro, terrified again by matters beyond his managing, dared not ask questions. Only since he was certain that wherever Raphael was, he would not be at Arenzano, he was thankful to get Paul away. At Arenzano he might get—sane!

The coachman apparently had his instructions, for they drove at reckless speed, and the light carriage and powerful horses swallowed up the miles as the advancing day

swallowed up the night, and sprang up presently with a burst of glorious sunlight.

VI

Signor Folli of the Pavia University, where he was a professor of Greek prose, had been over-working, and had been advised a change to quiet country and fresh air, with neither students nor pen and paper to tempt him to industry. He came to Forresti, found a use for pen and ink there which was not conducive to a rest-cure, and if his own account is too pedantic and poorly expressed for literal transcription, the matter of it is very clear and, with supplementary records, enables us to form a vivid picture of the happenings of that unhappy sunny April morning.

The early morning sun, streaming in the uncurtained window, awoke Signor Folli to action on the second morning of his holiday. He rose with something of the gaiety of a boy, and went down to see if chocolate and rolls were forthcoming at such an hour. There appeared to be a new arrival since the evening, a tall thin man who sat resting his head on his hand for the most part, and seemed little interested in food. There might be possibilities of companionship. Then the man by the window turned his head and Folli got a shock!

A white mask of a face and eyes with heavy black rims, so odd and so inscrutable in expression that Folli dropped his in horror.

He wondered if the forest would be safe walking. He had misty recollections of stories of wolves—he must ask. What could have put it into his head? He delayed going out. He sat where he was by the open window, partially hidden by a high-backed settle, and he looked out into the sunny little garden with an orchard beyond, already white with blossom.

There was the sound of a carriage outside. The man at the other table rose. Folli could hear his rather heavy deep breathing and saw him glance queerly at the door, and then he stepped out of the glass door nearest him and, crossing the garden, entered the little orchard and was lost amid the blossoms. Presently Folli discerned him seated on an overturned barrow staring at the ground.

There were steps in the passage outside and voices. The door was flung open and a man entered. He seemed to Folli, who appears to have been a small man, gigantic, not only by reason of his stature, but by the shadowing personality of him and also again (this made twice in a morning) Folli, who loved his fellow creatures, was shocked by a face. Behind the big man there appeared another man with an expression of nothing but sick dread on him. This man put his hand on the bigger man's arm—Folli wondered at his courage—and he spoke.

"He's not here, Paul, come away; let's go to Arenzano."

"He is here," returned the other fiercely; "Get out of my way, Baby, damn you!"

He strode through the room to the glass door by which the first man had left, and across the lawn; the frightened man followed him.

Folli shrank back behind the folds of the curtain. He did not want to be seen but he did undoubtedly want to understand.

In the passage outside, the innkeeper was wringing his hands, and a stable-man was saying over and over again: "It's not our business, Galmo. It's not our business."

Then the door was pulled to and Folli was alone again, and he looked out of the window to the orchard.

The first man—Folli instinctively referred to him as "my man"—had risen and was leaning back against the tree, and the big man stood opposite. He was talking. Once

the third of the group gave a little cry and put up his hands appealingly, and at last he did a thing that again caught Folli's admiration. He flung himself between the two and spoke, with passion and emphasis; some words even reached Folli's ears.

"You shall not murder each other! If you must fight—" He lost the context, then caught—"Properly—seconds—a doctor."

A moment later he ran back to the house carrying two long rapiers with him. He thrust his head into the window nearest Folli, and exclaimed:

"Ah! I thought I saw a man!"

He spoke rapidly and as one in utter desperation.

"Your pardon, sir, but are you—that is, can you second a man in a fight? I *will* have a second for him!"

Folli got to his feet.

"I have done so in my youth," he stammered out, and then pulling forth a card-case, he extracted a card and nervously handed it over.

"Not a doctor, by any chance?"

"I know a little of wounds, not much," muttered Folli.

"Galmo must serve then for a doctor—he's a wonder with horses! I *will* have things in order!"

He broke out in furious despair.

"Sir, these two men will fight! I've done all I can, but the devil is too strong for me. You must second the man who was staying here."

Folli was apparently by now in the garden, though he does not say when he got there. The rapiers were thrust into his hands.

"Keep these. I dared not leave them with them. I'll find Galmo."

He disappeared into the house, Folli stood helplessly holding the swords, and hating them. What did a second

have to do? Could he do it? Where had he seen that big man before?

The other reappeared.

"Galmo's brother is staying with him—and is a doctor! What luck! Come along, he will follow us."

He strode off, Folli following in his wake, and at some trouble to keep pace with him.

In the orchard between the trees the big man was striding up and down. Ten paces up and ten paces down, and talking under his breath, and always he kept between the gate and the first man—"my man" in Folli's account. This one had already taken off his coat and waistcoat, but had reseated himself on the barrow and sat with his hands between his knees staring at nothing. If the big man paused in his stride or looked at him, he shivered. When the gate slammed to, he started violently; and the other turned with insane joy in his eyes.

The man called by the ridiculous name of "Baby" went to the one on the barrow, and said:

"Raphael, this is Signor Folli, a Professor from Pavia. He's to second you. And I've got hold of a doctor—Galmo's brother, do you remember him? It's no use talking to Paul. Will this do?"

The Raphael man got up wearily, saw Folli, and bowed mechanically.

Folli held out the swords.

"Have I choice?" asked Raphael, indifferently.

"Baby," the impatient, said with a sort of groan.

"You are to take every advantage you can. For God's sake, wound him lightly and quickly, and let out some blood!"

He went back to his own man.

"I've forgotten the little I ever knew of the etiquette," began Folli, apologetically.

"There is no etiquette here." He looked Folli up and down oddly. "I regret having to trouble you. It's the sort of debt that is hard to pay."

"Please don't," returned Folli, almost tearfully. "I am glad to help. I think I remember now, I fought once and wounded my man."

The two men stood opposite each other. The sunlight filtered through the trees and flecked them with patches of brightness. Folli indeed insisted on moving his man. The grass seemed abnormally green, and the white blossoms amazingly white against the tender blue sky. It was an ideal spring day. Beneath the olives beyond the orchard, red anemones starred the grass. Folli saw them and looked away quickly. He saw then that a fifth man had joined them and was standing a little apart, with a frightened face.

The big man they called Paul sprang at once on guard, but Folli's man stood still with his sword down, and he spoke very clearly and steadily.

"Paul, listen to me. Nothing can come of this but black trouble, however it goes with either of us. I've wronged you, her, and our name, and I swear I'll go out of the world if you will let me go decently, so that neither you nor others are further harmed."

The answer came swift, hot, torrential, in the shape of a blow.

Folli's man passed his hand across his smarting face, and was on guard.

For months after, Signor Folli, who had gone to Forresti because of jangled nerves, heard at night the angry slither of steel. The furious onslaught of the man Paul only failed to go home by a miracle, it seemed. Even Folli's unpractised eye could see that his man was barely putting up a defence.

He glanced appealingly at "Baby." He had not bargained

for murder! "Baby" frowned and chafed, and thrust the stick he carried between the crossed blades.

"Paul! Raphael! Stop! Either you fight properly or leave off. Raphael's not even defending himself. It's murder!"

Paul laughed.

"He never lacked skill before to destroy men—or women! Move, Sylvestro."

"No—Wait! Raphael, you then, listen. Remember what I said to you, and *fight,* or I swear I'll run in between you, and you'll kill me!"

He dropped back.

Folli was aware of the doctor standing behind him. A badly dressed young man with a long sallow nervous face.

"Any one hurt?" he asked in a whisper.

Folli shook his head. His man was fighting now, and was clearly the better swordsman of the two, though the other's reach was prodigious. Yes, he was sure he was trying! Sylvestro—that was better than the stupid "Baby," Folli thought—was watching him too. He kept muttering: "If only he'll wound him in time."

Then the long reach gained its end. Folli saw the blade slip *in* not *by* the right side of his man, and there was a sickening, gasping cry. He fell before his assailant could pull out his sword, but he did so as the other touched the ground, and the white shirt crimsoned.

Folli and the doctor rushed forward, the former struggling against an overpowering sense of nausea, but Sylvestro was first. He caught the prone figure in his arms.

"Raphael! Raphael!" he cried.

The victor stood looking down at them. His face was calm now, with a look of keen satisfaction as of one who had done a good deed. He wiped his sword thoughtfully on the grass. The doctor pushed Folli aside and busied

himself, Sylvestro helping. Folli dared not look, till suddenly the wounded man began coughing.

"That will end it," muttered the doctor.

The fallen man feebly pushed aside the doctor's restraining hand.

"Paul!" he gasped in jerky sentences, but still audible. "You've got your revenge. I'd have died anyhow, but you chose this—now—now it's over—Paul! Forgive. Touch me once—I want you—"

He made an effort and stretched out his hand, and fell back with a moan.

That other, looking down at him, laughed, and then fell to cursing him in words so appalling that Folli covered his ears, and the doctor attending to the wounded man said, again and again:

"It's a case of sunstroke, of sunstroke, sunstroke!"

It seemed as if nothing would stop Paul. He poured out epithets on the dying man like flames of hot wrath, and then the victim of it struggled up again with diabolical strength, and cursed back. Cursed his brother in life and in death, in his affections, his honor, his salvation, till Sylvestro sprang up with a shriek.

"Are we all madmen?" he cried. "Paul, you are Lord of Arenzano, stop!" He caught him by the arm and actually flung him back out of sight of those other burning eyes, and Raphael fell back.

Folli leaned against a tree with his eyes hidden. Someone seized his arm and thrust a coat and waistcoat into his hand.

"Take those to him. Say nothing, only see where he goes—to Arenzano or Cardozza. Go with him, if you can." The speaker tore back to the prostrate figure on the grass.

Folli looked at the clothes; he could hardly bring himself to touch them, but in the distance the figure he was to follow

went with leisurely steps across the grass. Left to himself, Folli would have gone to the ends of the earth rather than encounter him again, but somehow one had to obey that agitated man. He overtook the other just by the house and thrust the garments before him, half thinking his last hour had come. But Paul was hardly aware of Folli; he only noticed that some one was handing him his clothes, and he put them on deliberately, looking with some disgust at a small red patch on his shirt sleeve. Finally, he went straight through the inn, and out to the courtyard. A carriage was still waiting, but the horses had been changed. Folli, mindful of orders, followed cautiously. He heard him say to the waiting groom, who stood with shaking limbs at the carriage door.

"To Cardozza, and go fast. I have to address the Senate to-night!"

The carriage swung out of the yard. Folli, with intense relief, turned back to the orchard, only stopping to look in at the room where the inn-people stood huddled together in a horrified group.

"They will want a room, a bed," he said.

"Is he badly hurt?" gasped one.

"Badly."

"And the Prince is safe?"

"The big man is not injured."

He felt, rather than heard the sigh of relief, and a woman said:

"The saints be praised!"

But Signor Folli praised neither saints nor devils. He went back to the orchard and some of them followed him.

VII

Carfax had sent a note to Damien, who was quartered at the Metelene Barracks, directly he heard of Paul's departure.

The note brought Damien hot-footed to the Orensē Palace, tempestuous, and swept with the alternate gusts of shame and fury, all directed against Raphael.

Carfax forced him to listen to a calm narrative of the events of the previous night, and showed him the pencil scrawl that Sylvestro had left:

"He has taken it into his head to go to Arenzano, perhaps it will save him. I will try and send back a message. Anyhow Raphael can't have gone there."

Carfax, remembering Raphael's random words, let out his sick dread to Damien, who still would not or could not see the reason for Sylvestro's fear.

"Of course, Paul can't fight him. He'll see as much by now, but I don't wonder he wants to! Oh, the black sick shame of it all! Why on earth can't Paul leave it, there'd be plenty ready to do the job."

Carfax noted wearily that while Sylvestro seemed to gain calm in an emergency, Damien seemed to lose it in proportion as he lost his temper.

"There'll be nothing for it but to resign—for Paul and me too! Ruin for the country if Paul goes? Yes, of course —that's Raphael's work! Back we must all go to Arenzano with dishonor for company! Oh, it's beyond words. It's destruction. I should think Paul *was mad*!"

Carfax, remembering the mad eyes and mad words, shivered. He had fancied himself impervious to horrors, but last night had shaken his assurance.

So they waited for a message and the morning wore on. A sunny, cheerful morning, warm and fragrant, hardly to be associated with disaster.

They went out into the formal garden behind the Palace. Damien stood by a fountain, dropping little stones into the clear green water to frighten the red fish. He was gloomy

and silent. Carfax was listening all the time for horses' hoofs. Hearing seemed the only sense left alive.

He had looked at the morning newspaper. It was ominously silent as to last evening's revelations. A secretary had told him that His Majesty had asked repeatedly for his Chief Minister. Everybody was apparently waiting for some event to be born.

Presently they went back to the big library and, since one must eat, at mid-day there came a meal.

Damien dismissed the footman impatiently.

The door opened and Paul came in. He was exceedingly white and his eyes were unnaturally bright, but he had an air of suppressed content. He stood at the door looking at them for a moment, and then walked to his accustomed place at the table.

Damien half rose in his chair. That white face beat more understanding into his head than all Carfax's words.

Paul put his hand on his chair and said, as he sat down, in a tone that conveyed even more satisfaction than his face:

"I have killed Raphael. Get me some food, Damien, I'm hungry."

Damien, who had quite lately had roughly declared his own good will to kill Raphael himself, started up and clutched the table edge.

"Paul, you don't know what you're saying! Where's Sylvestro?"

"Seeing to the funeral, I suppose. Oh, he wasn't dead when I left, worse luck, but he must be now. I ran him through the side. He wanted me to make friends—" He laughed, shook off Damien and sat down. The two stood staring at him, speechless for the moment.

Paul gazed in front of him; his bright eyes, hard and curious, saw everything and saw nothing. He poured out

some wine but he did not drink it. Carfax cautiously pushed it away and put water in its place.

"Paul," he said gently. "You are saying things which are very terrible. Raphael is your brother, and you and he have stood side by side through good and evil since you were babies. And he loves you."

Paul twisted his lips into a smile.

"You would not say so if you had heard his last words—though I gave them him back!" He looked up suddenly to Carfax with fear in his eyes.

"You don't think I've failed after all, do you?"

"I think you will soon wish you had, Paul."

Carfax leaned forward, speaking with slow emphasis, and with a passionate conviction that would have left his English friends stupefied with amazement, but it had come to him to see that the reason of this great "Boy" of his, in whom his pride and hope were centered, was swaying in the balance. Fear of him, anger with him, were equally useless. The only hope was to break through into the hidden range of his passionate affections. Reticence was an enemy, Sentiment an ally. Carfax must trample on his first instincts if he were to win.

He stretched out his hand and laid it on that of the Prince, and fought to establish a unity of mind that would open again the flood-gates of Paul's humanity.

Damien stood, leaning on his chair, watching them, but the fascination that still kept his eyes glued to Paul was horror.

He ended thus:

"If you cannot weep for the man you have killed, then weep for the dead brother that you will never see again. Weep for Arenzano without Raphael. The forest—without Raphael; all your beautiful life—without Raphael forever!"

And Paul sat staring before him as Raphael himself had sat staring that morning, and seeing nothing.

Then at last he turned his eyes to Carfax who saw the agony in them, and said:

"Stop! You torture me. I must forget—not remember. What are you doing, Carfax? Oh! curse you! I was beginning to forget!"

With a great and terrible cry he fell forward, and Carfax knew he had won!

Late that evening came a message from Sylvestro—a mere hurried, penciled line.

"Raphael still alive. I have sent to Alquarto. Cannot leave here, but I will send in the morning, if he still lives. Let me know if Paul is safe with you."

They told the Prince that Raphael lived. He listened with unmoved face and went up to his room. They heard him walking to and fro, up and down, long into the night.

Two days later Carfax went to Forresti and found the Duchess of Alquarto there, and the Countess Sylvestro with her. Sylvestro returned to Cardozza, and Carfax stayed on.

On the fourth morning after receiving the usual message and hearing it, as usual, without a sign, the Prince ordered his carriage and drove to the Palace.

XVII

DISASTER AND AGAIN DISASTER

I

TO one individual the downfall of Count Raphael was an unceasing evil joy.

Rivoli sat staring at the news sheet with a thin smile on his face, which for so long had forgotten how to smile.

The news looked better for his purpose in the crude print than it had done in writing. It had been a costly business first and last. Good tools, however driven by secret necessity were costly, but they were cheap at any price in view of the satisfaction with which Rivoli viewed the result of their work! He had made no error in leaving the doorway into his trap to chance. Chanced backed, that is, by his knowledge of human nature and temperament, and guarded by a hundred secret watching eyes.

He had neither pity nor thought for innocent victims. The Duchess of Alquarto, for example, was of no moment to him save that her existence served as an additional scourge for Count Raphael. It was by Chance again, that he saw tucked away in a corner of that infernal news-sheet a few lines, mentioning that the date of the fire, April 14th, was the date of the Prince d'Arenzano's birthday, and that he

was that day at Arenzano, according to custom. Then followed a satirical comment on the Count's absence from the family circle.

Rivoli's fertile brain decided that whatever occasions in his life might give Prince d'Arenzano cause for rejoicing, his birthday should not be one of them.

Two days later, he received news of the duel—more accurate news than ever reached the general public. He suffered some hours of real fear, for it was no part of his plan that Count Raphael should die yet. His life once assured, he felt a glow of approval towards the passion-torn man who had so accelerated his revenge.

There is very little data to go on. The only matter which remained quite clear is Rivoli's deliberate intention to wreak his vengeance on the d'Arenzanos with calculated cruelty and effectiveness, and that he carried out his intention with an amazing cunning that leads us to suspect that a very thin curtain indeed separated Luigi Rivoli from insanity.

Private letters, records, and accounts, carry us thus far—but then comes a gap.

There is no record whatever of the Prince's interview with the King, or of the eventual bargain between them. We know he fought hard to resign, and that enemies and supporters alike ringed themselves around him, and raised deafening protests.

There is little doubt that had the Prince resigned the helm, the ship of state would have foundered. One half of Society was acquiring a conscience slowly, and awoke to its existence when this moral catastrophe tore open the curtain and showed what lay behind the easy tolerance of Court life. The other half of Society whispered of bad luck, but were well disposed to accept the sacrifice of the "unlucky" as the price of its own safety, and publicly assumed a conscience they did not possess.

Talk of the scandal was endless—the tragedy of it seems to have been almost unperceived. It was regrettable, unfortunate, madly foolish, unpardonable—everything in turn but never the black overwhelming disaster it really was.

Here and there one catches a fleeting glimpse of the general mind in contemporary letters.

"They say the Prince insists on resigning. If he does we shall abandon Cardozza. With Sario at the head of affairs there would be no inducement to remain here."

"There is a report that the Prince has fought his brother and killed him, but there is no confirmation of it. We are now all trying to find out who had the inconceivable stupidity to give the story away." And so on.

Not good or useful reading!

There is incontrovertible (but not producible) evidence for believing that the Prince at last agreed to remain in office at the price of the Queen's banishment. It seems inconceivable that there should have been any question of her return to Cardozza, but Frederick was Frederick! He, however, had to choose between the Minister who removed from his shoulders the burden of State responsibility and the company of the woman who had never pretended to be faithful to him, but who, until now, had used sufficient discretion to permit him the privilege of short-sight.

He chose the Minister. It is not unlikely it was a case of that or his crown. The Queen was banished to Rivo, and Prince d'Arenzano continued to direct the affairs of the country.

The Duchess of Alquarto had never been sufficiently well-known in Cardozza to make much appeal to the popular imagination, so her share in the calamity provoked little comment beyond fatuous pity that bordered on contempt.

So much for the public effect of the great scandal.

The private and immediate results were naturally more

intricate. There are some letters of Count Sylvestro to King Augustine which, coupled with the Carfax correspondence of that period, make the sequel of the events that ended with the disappearance of Count Raphael fairly clear.

King Augustine himself writes:

"My dear Count,

"A horrible rumor has reached us, following on the heels of the miserable business, to the effect that the Prince has met and fought Raphael, and that the latter is mortally wounded. Kindly send me information as to the truth or falsity of this by the courier who bears this message, and also of your respective fortunes.

"Believe me to entertain the greatest sympathy for you all in this calamity, and to assure you of my friendship.

"Augustine."

"Sir,

"I have deep regret in confirming rumor for once. They fought five days ago. Raphael is still living but it is almost permissible to wish it might end, so greatly does he suffer. The Duchess of Alquarto—like the noble woman she is—is with him. He still lies at the little inn at Forresti, and it is doubtful when he can be moved. I returned myself to Cardozza last night, leaving my wife and Mr. Carfax, whom I am thankful to say was staying with us, in charge. It adds greatly to our anxieties that the Duchess expects their child in August, and such a shock is not conducive to its well-being. One would have imagined that my brother might have remembered our own loss and forborne adding to the tragic possibilities of the present. Truly Love drives men to strange cruelties. We are in a parlous state here, Paul being greatly desirous to resign, the King and the country

clamorous to retain him. How the struggle will end I cannot foresee.

"I cannot too deeply express my thanks for your kindness in writing us your assurance of continual friendship, for I fear the injury our House has inflicted on the country must have widespreading results, and can leave not even Your Majesty untouched. Poor Damien is beaten to the earth with the strain of it, and since he cannot resign until Paul sets him an example, he is preparing to transfer to an Artillery Corps stationed abroad. For my part I am too concerned with those immediately affected to trouble much what the world says or thinks. I will send a further report of Raphael's progress wthin the week.

"I have, Sir, the honor to be
"Your most devoted servant,
"Sylvestro d'Arenzano."

Couriers, without doubt, went to and fro between Forresti and Mantos. Even the scandal involving the ruin of his notorious cousin could not quench the deep friendship of the King for Count Raphael. Indirectly it led to his private visit to England and his amazing marriage. Probably the only happy outcome of the disaster.

Carfax and Count Sylvestro exchanged duties from time to time, as well as letters and reports.

The duties at Forresti were of a nature to try the devotion of the stoutest, and the almost incredible behavior of Count Raphael as he moved towards convalescence was such that one wonders, if he had not cut the knot himself, what would have been the outcome of it.

In the earlier days of his illness the presence of his wife seemed to have calmed his fever, but on the first steps toward convalescence the man's whole nature seemed to change. From a dumb gratitude to the really splendid woman whose

love overcame the blow to her honor and pride that her husband had dealt her, Count Raphael passed to a morose opposition, rejecting her services, refusing her company, or receiving her with a wounding sarcasm that was more than her bruised spirit could bear.

It seems unlucky that during these trying days she should not have kept up a regular correspondence with her friend, whom she had left in charge at Alquarto. There is one letter extant of this period: one wonders whether its preservation was the result of accident or design. It is sad enough reading.

To Adèle DeLille.

"My dear Friend,

"Your letter with its sympathy and understanding was balm to me. I keep it on me as a reminder that whatever goes to ruin in this cruel world, Friendship at least continues to burn a pure light. Raphael is better, even to the extent of being laid on a sofa each day, but I cannot say that the improvement in his health brings improvement in the situation. Alas, with returning strength—little as it is—his humor towards me has changed. I tell myself it is but the caprice of a sick man, but in my heart I feel it is no caprice. He will hardly let me enter his room, will accept nothing from me, and to-day met my visit with such words that I—to save myself from unsuitable retorts—went away. I am hardly in a condition to stand more. Judge how upset I am that I should write such words to you of the man whom I had decided to forgive utterly. Adèle, he is making forgiveness very hard. The devotion of Mr. Carfax and his care for me are the only things that make the situation bearable. What will be the end? I cannot see, indeed, to-day I can only *feel,* hence the weakness of writing to you in such a strain. Discount my complaints, dear friend,

remembering I am in a poor condition to judge calmly or exercise the forbearance I should show.

"Eunice is a true helper but she has gone to Arenzano for two days to see after the little Max who, poor child, amongst all these disasters is forlornly troubled. Sylvestro was here last week, kind and encouraging, as usual, but Raphael gave him a bad reception. He is still fairly considerate to Mr. Carfax. It is most unhappy of all that he refuses to have the services of his faithful Romano who, in utter despair, has now returned to Arenzano. I wonder sometimes if he aims at driving each one of us away in turn. Nothing seems too fantastically absurb or unbearable.

"I hope for another letter soon to support me. It is a vast consolation to think of you at Alquarto, to know I shall not return to a home peopled only with shadows!

"I am,

"Your unhappy friend,

"Adrienne."

One is tempted to wonder whether, in view of subsequent events, the Duchess had not hit on the exact truth and that Raphael, torn with remorse, shame, and misery that turned on itself, was not deliberately attempting to drive from his side all those generous friends who were still willing to pardon his offence. It is certain that a short time after his wife wrote this letter, he took the one more step she had feared, insulting her so cruelly that within an hour she was on her way homewards, accompanied by Countess Sylvestro, who feared for her to take the journey alone.

Carfax was therefore left in sole charge. It was now possible to move the invalid, but the awkward question, "Where to?" had to be faced. They stayed on at the little inn from sheer reluctance to discuss the matter.

The result of the Duchess' forced retreat and the long

journey was the premature birth of her son, who came into the world on June 18th, 1833, and was christened Honoré Sebastian Augustine.

The news of the birth and the welfare of the mother and child was sent to Carfax for transmission to the father. Raphael's attitude to his old tutor was fast going the way of his attitude to his wife and his brother Sylvestro. Again one can imagine set purpose in the apparently inexcusable behavior.

He appears to have taunted him with his nationality, his colorless life, his failure with the d'Arenzano family in general—and even his faithfulness to the worst member as proceeding from mercenary motives. The last taunt had taken Carfax abruptly from his presence with his news untold; and all we can conceive is that the over-keen ear had caught stray words uttered by the courier as he handed in his letter in the courtyard below the bedroom window—

"A boy—Her Grace doing well so far—"

Carfax had said no word of courier or letter when he entered. Finding his invalid in a bad mood, he determined to get him dressed first, and on to the sofa in the poor sitting room, which was all the inn could offer them.

Then the growing irritation, the renewed taunts, and the fine insult! Carfax succumbed and went out—another moment and he felt he must have struck the man, helpless as he was.

When he came back two hours later, Raphael had disappeared.

II

With that Count Raphael passed out of the lives of his friends for six long black years. Short of issuing public advertisement, they did all they could to trace him, but he had covered his tracks well. He had a small fortune of his

own, left him by Count Everard, who had died some ten years back, and made Raphael his heir with the cynical avowal that some day he would fall out with Paul, and need bread and butter. Sylvestro ascertained that the whole capital had been drawn out in hard cash, but that the rest of the money that lay to his credit, and was part of the settlement which Paul had made over to him when he married, was untouched. Also a note was left for Count Sylvestro only to be delivered if enquiries were made. It was a cruelly curt note but it sufficiently prevented even Sylvestro pursuing enquiries further.

"Dear Sylvestro,

"You will not receive this unless you are still sufficiently curious as to my downward career to try to ascertain what I am doing with my money. You will find I have taken complete possession of it. It is sufficient, with care, to keep me going for quite as long a time as I care to look forward to. The rest, which is not mine, can be reclaimed by the original owner. I leave instructions with the bank to that purpose. I have at last found my true *métier:* to wit, an independent existence free from the foolish responsibilities and publicity of that life to which you are so unfortunately condemned. If you have any spark of feeling for a man who was your brother, and is now no more, you will not plague me by tracing me out to gratify your curiosity about a non-existent being. I say this much because there is just a remote chance that you may have the inconceivable folly to stand apart from the philosophic contempt of the rest of your family at the providential demise of an offending member.

"Do not burden yourself with remembering me to anyone.

"Yours truly,

"Raphael Salvator."

This heartless production could hardly have done much to cheer the burden of Count Sylvestro's days, for he well knew that Raphael's bitterest words covered his deepest misery, but he made no effort to trace his brother. Raphael was alive. To the kindly Count Sylvestro that fact was consolation. He had no great imagination but he went about his daily tasks the easier for knowing that somewhere or other on God's earth his brother was alive!

The Duchess, with her new-born son, made no attempt to trace him either. For her, the Raphael of her dreams, the lover, the husband, the hero, was dead. She mourned for him as dead. It might even be said that, as time went on, she actually believed in the fiction her imagination had set up as a barrier between herself and the cruel truth; at all events she chose to bring up her son in such a belief. The little Honoré grew up in entire ignorance of the truth.

So the first black year passed with no warning of the further blackness it was dragging in its train.

The Prince continued to administer the State. But he failed utterly to administer himself. He had been a religious man in the best sense. He denied his religion since it demanded of him the renunciation of his hate. He refused access to his old friend and confessor, Father Pierre, who since boyhood had been his good adviser and somewhat stern monitor. The vast humanity and quick affection of the man became entirely hidden. Men no longer sought him, they feared him. They might indeed trust his intellect and his integrity but as a personality he was obeyed with an alacrity that no longer sprang from love; he was avoided socially as far as policy permitted, and he went on his way unheeding, a stern hard man, who had braved the satirical comments of the world in retaining his post, and flung at it scorn for scorn, and did his work without reference to any man's opnion.

Early in March, 1834, Queen Antoinette was killed by a fall from her horse. It would be affectation to suppose the accident was a source of regret to anyone but her betrayed husband. It produced in him a dull melancholia which left him prone to illness and no doubt aggravated the attack of pneumonia which, in the early autumn of 1834, ended his life.

But before that date new disaster had fallen on the House of Arenzano.

Almost the last letter that Count Sylvestro wrote was to Leslie Thornton, with whom he corresponded from time to time, reporting such domestic news of the family as might be suitable to pass on to the King, if such were Thornton's desire.

"Dear Thornton,

"I think it may interest you to hear news of Raphael. I saw him last week in Paris. He wrote for the first time asking me to see after some money affairs which could only be conducted in Cardozza, and to remit results to him in Paris. Contrary to his direct orders I took the results in person. He was moved to vast anger at first but eventually decided to endure my presence, and we spent the evening in avoiding the many subjects that must not be mentioned. He seems to entertain no thought of approaching his wife nor did he enquire for her, though—with some skill, I flatter myself—I conveyed to him information of her and his son's well-being. He also declines to approach his country. I regret to say that he still looks most infernally ill, though a cautious enquiry as to his health was not well received. It cut me to the heart to leave him there alone but what could I do? He made it clear he had no further desire for my company, whereas my dear Eunice has the greatest

desire for it, so I returned to Arenzano. There is nothing to be done but leave him for the present.

"My poor little wife is a changed woman these days. She was always one of the comfortable, happy souls who believe everything is really right in the word—had I not such a tendency myself in far off days?—but she cannot square our tragedy with any sort of rightness. Happily Max has to be considered. It has been a bad shock for the child. He was devoted to both Raphael and Paul, as you know. To be told that he must never mention Raphael's name in Paul's hearing; to see—from afar and at wide intervals—Paul, so horribly altered, and so unapproachable as to be practically oblivious to his existence, would alone be enough to empty his Paradise.

"Paul has been here three times. Eunice and Max, I am afraid, are both terrified of him; probably, if I dared, I should be too! He only comes, happily for us, when necessity and the law drive him, and the people get out of the way and the women cross themselves, and think I don't see: and Eunice and I try to make conversation with each other, but he does not listen. It is not exhilarating! If I had not her and Max to keep me warm I think I'd emigrate to Hades as an agreeable change!

"Forgive me, my good friend, for thus using you as a well into which to pour my sorrows; but it's a relief, which I trust you will never need to experience, to speak plain facts to some one.

"Next week is Paul's birthday, so far generally celebrated here with a ceremonial dinner to the Orensē nobles and much feasting of the people; and it happens to be the anniversary of that thrice accursed fire at Brantzia. No, I shall *not* convey felicitations to Paul. The dinner must be given but I pray to all the saints that he may not take it into his head

to be present. Set down, of your good charity, my despondency to a fear he *will* come.

"And it is of Paul I write. The father, mother, brother of his turbulent family—Paul, the well-beloved—I wish I were a woman, Thornton, to weep as I would!

"Your sincere friend,

"Sylvestro d'Arenzano."

The anniversary dawned without the shadow of the Prince's personal presence falling on Arenzano. It was a clear, lovely day. All preparations being made for the feast, and the numberless duties having been performed, Count Sylvestro looked round for some refreshment to his spirit before facing the laborious make-believe of the afternoon. There might be just time before the expected guests arrived to try the little sailing boat he had built (Boats were his special hobby). Long afterwards it was discovered the idea was suggested to him by the young workman who had assisted him in the building of the boat, and who appeared naturally anxious to try it.

They both disappeared in the direction of the lake. The new boat was waiting and ready; Jano, the helper, had seen to that. They were soon off, Count Sylvestro manœuvering his little craft up and down the lake with consummate skill. It was with regret he turned again to the shore and duty. But as he turned—on a sudden, before he could voice his amazed anger—the ropes of the sail were cut by the traitor, Jano, and another boat that had dashed out from behind a sheltering promontory ran alongside. He dropped the tiller and sprang forward, but a blow from an oar, catching him across the face, destroyed his balance in the rocking boat, he fell across the thwarts and a sand bag descending on his head rendered him unconscious. The four men carried

his unconscious form into a little wood that bordered that end of the lake, and two, returning, busied themselves with the boat, which they capsized and pushed out into the lake; refastened the other boat, which was one the Count used for fishing purposes, and rejoined their companions, who with their unconscious victim were concealed in a dilapidated hut of some charcoal-burner, and there they remained till night lent her black assistance to their aims.

The hour of arrivals drew on and the Countess Sylvestro dispatched messengers to her husband's room to learn if he were ready. Then messengers to the stable, the foresters' quarters, the Court House—messengers went everywhere, with equally futile results.

The first guests to arrive were the Orsenas—the premier noble of the Province and old tried friends. Orsena, seeing the distracted state of the Countess, took possession of the situation. The search was recommenced and this time extended to the lake, where the over-turned boat with its wrecked sail was floating forlornly. There was no shadow of reason to doubt its evidence, the lake was known to be unfathomable. The new boat had evidently misbehaved itself, had capsized and—expert swimmer though he was—both he and the man Jano must have got entangled in the wreckage, or hit by the fallen sail, and sank.

Orsena rushed to the Castle heartbroken. His was the task of breaking the news to the Countess and the household, dispatching a messenger to the Prince, and dispersing the assembled guests.

So the sun set on the thirty-first birthday of Prince d'Arenzano, and the first anniversary of Raphael's dishonor.

The madman who sat in the place of Savola had struck his second blow at the House of Arenzano.

III

It was in the autumn of 1834 that King Frederick succumbed to an attack of pneumonia.

He left one child only, Louise Theresa Sophie, aged twelve, heir to a name dimmed by private and public scandals, and to a throne none too securely planted, and a Constitution left in a state of flux.

He also left the Regency of his kingdom in the hands of Paul d'Arenzano. Perfectly aware that under the circumstances, no personal entreaties would induce the Prince to undertake the responsibilities entailed, King Frederick achieved the one piece of personal statecraft of his reign. He allowed the Prince to believe the Duke of Florence was to be Regent, but in the absence of the Prince, he summoned both the Duke and the most powerful Ministers, and declared to them that by his will, which would be publicly read on the evening of his death, he had left Prince d'Arenzano Regent and Guardian of his daughter in absolute trust and belief in the Prince's ability to protect her and her kingdom until she was of age to rule it herself.

"Which will be—never!" he added, with a very little smile, and went on feebly:

"You are all good men, I know, but there's only one man who can rule Romanzia and he's ruled it for years—so you'd better make him continue."

Two days later the King died.

The Duke of Florence and the other Ministers were only too eager to follow the late king's will. The honor of being Regent was at best an uneasy honor for a strong man, and a superlatively uncomfortable one for a weak man. Those who constituted the Government were by now picked men, and however they feared the now silent morose man who actually ruled they had no doubt of his ability. Moreover,

the populace adored him still, and those were not days for an insecure throne to ignore the *Vox populi.*

They urged those and a vast collection of reasons on the angry man who at first would hear nothing of their devices or the late King's will. The latter had been read to the people within two hours of his death, as he had ordered, and it practically shackled the Prince. To refuse meant a public upheaval. In the end he consented, and took up the heavy burden with grim defiance of certain scandalized Embassies who were not inclined to forget his peculiar position in respect to his brother's miserable story.

Thus began the second great period of Paul d'Arenzano's life. A period during which he raised his country to the status of a second class Power in Europe, established the Constitution on a firm basis, initiated the most enlightened franchise of those days, and laid the foundations of a generous educational system. There are few who dare criticize adversely the public work he achieved during those years. It was sufficient to redound to the credit of any man whose private interests and intimate life were of a negligible quality; but when one considers how through all his public labors the Prince was harassed and broken by domestic catastrophes, with the care of his own small Principality, the guardianship of an extremely annoying little girl, in addition to the care of his own youngest brother—one is lost in bewilderment that one man could find strength to shoulder so weighty a burden. His failures, and especially the final failure of this period, were the results not of incompetence but of temperament and uncontrollable circumstances, one and all to be nobly retrieved at a still later day.

The difficulty that the period presents to the chronicler of the Prince's life is that, while masses of records and political material are forthcoming, private records seem to have been

lost, or non-existent. Henry Carfax, after one more year's desultory intercourse with Damien, drops out of sight; correspondence with Leslie Thornton ceases; the poor little Countess Eunice only survived the loss of her husband six months; and the Duchess of Alquarto ceased to correspond with Madame DeLille for some unknown reason, and occupied herself entirely with her estate, her son, and the memory of a man who never really existed save in her too romantic and idealistic mind.

Cellino, Father Pierre, and at one point Thornton again, are the only available authorities, with one remarkable exception, and that is the little Queen herself, whose naive impressions of her Regent and guardian form the most human document existing.

For the purposes of a narrative the Diary must be divided into parts, and supplemented by such information as can be collected from the above mentioned sources.

The Diary is written in a series of small brown-covered books, the earlier portions in a straggling childish hand. It is a notable fact that Queen Theresa was never alluded to—save in State documents—as anything but "Queen Tessa." She was a greatly misunderstood woman, and though the mutual enmity between her and her people in the end was softened, yet she had scant justice done her by her own country, and twice over, at least, she owed her throne as well as her life to the Prince, who was her Regent, her guardian, her friend, and finally—after vast struggles—her husband.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE DIARY OF QUEEN TESSA
1834 TO 1836

OCTOBER 10th: Madame Zelli keeps a diary. I have seen her writing in it. I think I will do the same. When I am old it will be valuable. That is what Madame Zelli says.

"I begin now. I am twelve years old and the King, who was my father, is dead. So I am Queen. My mother is dead too. She went to live at Rivo last year and my father and I lived here in Cardozza. It was very dull after Mamma and Count Raphael went away. I liked Count Raphael. He was Mamma's Equerry and he used to give me chocolates and tell me stories, and both Mamma and he used to give me chocolates and tell me stories, and both Mamma and I were much annoyed when he married. I had always meant to marry him myself when I grew up, but he seems to be gone too, and I am never allowed to talk of him. Prince d'Arenzano and Father came in to see me one day while I was putting some rose-leaves into a box, and the Prince said: 'What a lovely box, Princess.' And I told him that Count Raphael had given it to me and it was my best one. They went away, and Madame Zelli told me I must never mention

Count Raphael at all, never to Father or Prince d'Arenzano; she said they had quarrelled, and that Count Raphael was not a good man. I cried and said he was, and that Mamma liked him. I wonder what it will be like to be a Queen, and when I may have new dresses and if they will be long. In history there is always a Regent when the Queen is too young to reign. I suppose I am. I am going for a drive today. All the carriages are black, so are my dresses. I do not like black things.

"October 14th.

"I am to have a Regent. He is Prince d'Arenzano. I do not know if I am glad. He is very beautiful to look at and very clever and I like clever people; but he makes people do what he says and I hope he won't tell me to do anything. Count Raphael (I can talk about him in my diary) used to say that everyone had to do what Paul (that is the Prince's name) told them. I used to feel sorry for Max. Prince d'Arenzano came to see me this morning with the Duke di Florence, and he called me 'Your Majesty,' and bowed to me, which was nice. The Duke told me that the Prince was to be my Regent and he seemed to think it was very kind of him to be it, but I should think it was a great thing to be my Regent! The Prince seemed very grave and sad, not all sparkly as he used to be. I suppose that is partly because my father has died and partly because he goes on being sad about Count Raphael. I wonder what he would do if I asked him where Count Raphael was. He could not tell the Queen to be quiet! He seemed kind and asked me if I liked my *gouvernante*. I told him I liked Madame Zelli best. He said he should see me every day, and if I wanted anything I must ask him. I am not to be crowned till next year.

"November 30th.

"The Regent—but I shall call him Prince Paul as I used

to do—is going to be tiresome. He is sending Madame Zelli away. I told him I would not let her go and that, if I were Queen, she could not go unless I said so. And he said: 'Madame' (I do like being called Madame) 'the appointments of Your Majesty's household are the affair of your Regent.' No, I am not sure if I like him. Sometimes he is very nice and calls me 'little Queen Tessa'; but when he is angry he calls me just 'Tessa,' and I have to pretend not to notice, but sometimes he says 'Tessa' nicely. I do like him if I can make him smile but it is very difficult to do it. I can remember when he often smiled, and it makes him look beautiful.

"January 31st.

"Yesterday was my Coronation Day.

"I woke quite early and I had to be ready by ten o'clock. I do think my dress was lovely. It was of lace cut not really long, and it had an over-dress of silver cloth and a big long mantle of crimsony-purple velvet that was dreadfully heavy, and I had my hair fastened with a silver band. I do not thnk I am really as ugly as I used to be, but I do wish I were as beautiful as Mamma was, and had golden hair and not black hair.

"Just as I was finishing dressing, Prince Paul sent to know if I would receive him. I was glad, and when he came I could hardly wait, while he bowed to me, to ask him how he liked my dress. He said it was quite beautiful, and then he took out a case and gave me a necklace of three strings of pearls. He said it was his coronation gift and would I wear them? I made him fasten them on. I had to wear a ribbon and the diamond Star of St. Francis, and a diamond cross hung from an enamelled chain, and three rings which were all too big and I feared they would slip off. I like my pearls best of all because they are really my own. Then we went down, and in the hall four Pages and Max were

waiting and the Pages had to carry my train, and Max the Sword of State. He looked nearly as grave as the Regent, and I told them both they were dreadfully gloomy and serious, and the Prince said quite nicely: 'It is a serious business, my Queen, but Heaven helping me I will make your crown a sure and lasting reality.' He kissed my hand. That was when we were waiting for the carriage and no one else was near, because I drove last of all to the Cathedral. I think I do like him very much.

"He drove with me and sat opposite, and not beside me. The people seemed very pleased and cheered a great deal. It was fine and sunny but cold. The carriage had windows all round so that every one could see me, and it was all pale blue and gold inside. The Regent told me I must keep bowing, and said that the people liked to feel that their Queen really wanted them to love her and care how they felt. But all the same I could see that a great deal of the cheering was for him.

"In the Cathedral I sat on a great chair on a raised dais all alone. It was covered with a big ermine cloak and my four Pages stood at each corner and held a canopy over me, and Max stood at my left holding the Sword. It has a diamond hilt and must have been horrid to hold. The Regent had a chair on my right but not on the dais. When it was time for me to be crowned he led me to the altar steps and the Archbishop and the Cardinals put the Crown on my head. (It had to be made smaller for me. It has emeralds and diamonds all round and the Cross of St. Francis in front). Then one Cardinal took the Sword from Max and gave it to me, and the Regent led me back to my chair, and we stood there while the Proclamation was read, and when that was over everything was quiet in the Cathedral till we heard the noise of the guns outside. Then they sang a long *Te Deum* and Max came and knelt on one knee and

took the Sword from me, and he put a velvet cushion under my feet; it was such a high chair I could not touch the floor unless I sat on the edge. I do not think anyone heard me but I just managed to ask him if my crown was on straight. Then the Archbishop preached ever such a long sermon right in front of me, but I don't remember what it was about, for I was looking at the Regent and wondering why he went on looking so stern and unhappy, when he used to be so different. Just as I was getting very tired of it all, I saw a lady with her coronet all cock-eyed over one ear. She looked so funny that I wanted to laugh, and I tried to make Max see it but he wouldn't, he was looking at the Regent as I had done. I counted fifteen different shades of blue in one gallery!

"Then came the homage-giving. The Regent came first and I liked this part best of all. He stood quite still for a moment before he moved, looking down, and then came and knelt at my feet and put his hands in mine—the Archbishop showed us how, and his hands were so cold I longed to warm them—and he said I was his 'overlord,' which was so silly I hoped he would smile, but he didn't, and he swore to give me faithful and loyal service as long as he should live and kissed my hand. Max did the same. It is quite a nice feeling they belong to me in a different way from the others, for this is the Orensē homage only. All the other nobles, at least the head of each house, just kissed my hand and swore obedience. I rather wished the Regent had done that!

"When we got back to the Palace there was a big meal and I was at last allowed to take off the heavy cloak and train. The Regent sat by me and the Archbishop sat on the other side. The Regent made me eat but he would not let me drink the champagne, only the light wine I always have; he said there was enough to go to my head without that.

Still he was very kind and told me who every one was. Afterwards, I had to receive the Ambassadors and then my Council. I was so tired that I felt cross and if I had been eight years old instead of twelve I should have cried; but the Regent said: 'Courage, little Queen, go on being brave; it is nearly over now.' It was five o'clock when he led me out on a balcony that overlooks the great Square, and there were a mass of people there. They cheered and shouted, and cried: 'Long live the Queen!' and then suddenly, 'Long live our Regent!' That was the loudest of all and he got quite black-looking and held up his hand in anger. But I caught it and held it against me and said: 'We can both live long, Paul (I forgot 'Prince'), let them say it, please!' He kissed my hand, and they shouted more than ever. Then everything seemed to go round and round, and I thought I was falling till I found I was in the Prince's arms, and he was carrying me in to the sofa, and then he sent every one away but Countess Rosene.

"That is all I really remember about the Coronation, but it is not all or even half what is told in the papers. To-morrow I am to review the troops and I shall ride with the Regent. Max is to come too. I insisted on this; for a long time they said 'No,' but I got my way in the end.

"February 20th.

"We had a dreadful time to-day. I got angry with Professor Carvello and flung a dictionary at him; and it missed him and caught the Prince, who opened the door at that moment. It was so funny that I could not help laughing. He said in his dreadfulest voice (which, I don't mind saying *here,* makes me a bit frightened): 'Did you mean that for me or the Professor, Tessa?' I told him it was meant for the Professor, only he had dodged but perhaps he wouldn't, if he had known who was coming in.' He sent M. Carvello away and stood waiting till he had gone, and

then he told me to pick up the book. Naturally, I wasn't going to do that if I could help it, so I tried not to. But he told me again and he looked so black that I thought I had better, and he said as a punishment I was to sit still in a chair where I was for ten minutes. So of course I got up to go away though it was silly because a big strong man like that can make one stop. He made me. I shall never like him agan.

"April 16th.

"I was sure that something must have happened yesterday, because I noticed all the people about the Court talking in whispers and corners, and no one would explain to me what it was. I was not allowed to go for a drive, so I wandered about the Palace, and in a room where there wasn't any one I found a newspaper, and in quite big letters there was printed: 'Count Damien d'Arenzano charged with selling plans of the Riva fortifications to Foreign Powers. Arrest of the Count.'

"Of course it is a lie. People like Paul and his brothers don't do things of that sort. Still it was a horrid thing to say, and they had arrested him. I felt very angry and miserable but I wouldn't ask any one about it in case they should thnk I believed it.

"To-day I *had* to ask, but I could not make them tell me anything till I told them I would do no lessons at all unless they did. Then Carvello told me it was true that the Count was arrested, and he was to be tried; and he added that they would never have dared to do this if the evidence had not been overwhelming. I asked why the Prince did not stop it at once, and he said the Prince would be the last man who could interfere, but that the thing was inexplicable. Also he said that it was odd such a misfortune should have again happened on the Prince's birthday.

"April 23rd.

"It is a week since the Prince has been to see me, but it's because of the trial, not because he's angry with me. No one talks of anything but the trial whether I am there or not. No one seems to believe it, and yet they keep saying that the evidence is conclusive. I suppose they mean that it sounds true. It makes me very angry and wretched for, however true it *looks,* it can't be so. The Prince's brother couldn't possibly have done such a thing. It must have been some one who looked like the Count, only as he is such a beautiful young man it is difficult to think any one could be mistaken for him. I heard Madelaine saying to Marie that if he would, or could, only explain where he was and what he was doing on a certain day and night, it would be all right, but he just won't say. And Marie said if it were any other of the family one would think a lady was involved, but no one has ever talked of him in connection with any woman. And then Madelaine said: 'But by all accounts he is just the sort of man to give up anything to shield a woman.' 'Not the honor of his name, surely,' Marie replied. They moved away, and I did not hear any more; but it has set me thinking. I believe I have a plan!

"April 24th.

"I made such a beautiful plan but the Prince would not let me do it. I am bitterly disappointed and I shall put it all down here, just to prove that it is not the fault of the Queen if they prove poor Count Damien a traitor.

"I remembered that the King has a last right to pardon any one he likes, because it has happened in history once or twice, and I suppose a Queen can do the same. So I thought why shouldn't I pardon Count Damien for something which he has not done, before all those silly judges say he has done it. So I wrote a note to the Prince and sent it by a special messenger to the court, and this is what I wrote:

" 'Dear Regent,

" 'I am so sorry for this stupid trial for something which of course Count Damien never did. Will you please let me stop it all by exercising the prerogative of the Crown? I know that I can for I read it in the last history book just in those words. If I can do it at once they must stop the trial. I know it sounds as if I was pardoning hm for something which he had done, but I don't really mean that. But the papers talk about 'The Crown *versus* Count Damien d'Arenzano, and if I am the Crown I don't want to be versus any one. I dont care about their silly evidence. Please let me know how to do it or do it for me, and tell Count Damien how sorry I am people will be so stupid, but they are, and the only thing to do is to stop them going on being stupider.

" 'Your affectionate

" 'Queen Tessa.'

"I didn't quite know how to end as I had never written to hm before, but it wasn't really not true to say affectionate, because I have left off not liking him now he has so much trouble.

"And it was all no good at all! He sent me back a little note and in case I ever lose it I will copy it in here.

" 'Dear little Queen,

" 'Your Regent and friend returns you his deepest gratitude for your kind thought and even more for your brave faith in his brother. It will never be forgotten by us, though the way of escape you offer is not possible. Believe me, if it were, I would take it, but it would not clear my brother and it would be contrary to the laws of your country. But in all this sorry business the recollection of your desire and your belief is like a lamp in the darkness, and he and I will treasure it as long as we live.

" 'I am your faithful servant and friend,

" 'Paul Landuoc, Prince d'Arenzano.'

"It is silly to cry over things; I wish I were a boy and did not. Count Damien has been found guilty and is to be dismissed from the Army with ignominy, and exiled. *Horrid!* And no one really believes it true.

"May 2nd.

"The Regent has come back again, and this morning I heard them saying that he was trying not to be Regent any more because of his brother being sent away for something he didn't do; and that perhaps the Duke di Florence would be Regent! I felt cold shivers all over me. I knew there was a Council in the Palace that day and the Prince was there, and I said nothing to any one but went away straight to the Prince's apartments. There were lots of people in the anteroom and, though they all bowed and stood up, they all stared at me in a way I did not like, so I just waved my hand and said I had business with the Prince and walked right into his room. The Duke and the Prince were quite alone and he (I don't mean the Duke) was leaning his head on his hand, and I did not like his look at all. They stared at me like the others and then both stood up. I don't think if the Duke had not been there, that the Regent would have been nice at all. I sat down and told them to do the same as I had something important to say. I told them I had just heard that the Regent did not want to be Regent any longer, but that I would not have anyone else, so he must be. I was quite nice to the Duke and said I did not want to be rude to him, but I did not like changes and I was sure he would not like looking after me as I gave the Regent a good deal of trouble, only we had now got used to each other, so he must go on being Regent. I spoke as quickly as I could in case they should interrupt before I finished, which would not have been polite, but then the Regent is not always polite. Still, when I stopped they said nothing, but looked at each other, till presently the Prince said in a cold

sort of voice: 'Who told Your Majesty I thought of resigning?' I was not going to give Marie or Madelaine away, besides they had not told me, so I said it was talked of generally. The Prince looked at the Duke again and said: 'You see!' It did not seem to me there was anything to see except that the Prince must not resign, and I said so. Then the Duke got up and kissed my hand, (I wish he were not so fat!) and he said: 'Your Majesty very ably voices the desires of your Ministers, and I trust your wishes will accomplish what our prayers have failed to do.' 'Her Majesty has no business to interfere with State affairs. It's preposterous!' put in the Regent quite angrily, but I kept my eye on him because often when he speaks like that he is going to give in. It is only no use to argue when he is icy cold. I just waited and so did the Duke, while he walked up and down. I think he wanted the Duke to go so that he could say what he liked to me, but the Duke couldn't go unless I dismissed him and I wasn't going to do that. At last the Prince flung himself into a chair again and said in a tired voice: 'Have it your own way. I have not a shred of honor left in the eyes of Europe as it is, what matters the rest?' And I cried out, 'Europe doesn't know anything about your honor. How can anyone else telling lies hurt you? The people want you and I want you, isn't that enough?' He laughed in a way I did not like and it sounded as if he wanted to bite some one. 'You have got your way, I've nothing left of my own to care about.' I got up, thinking I had better go before he could take it back but I just stopped to remind him of one thing. 'You've got Max anyhow!' He gave me such a queer look I was glad to get away. I walked through the crowd again with my head up, remembering that I was the Queen and had made the Prince go on being Regent, and I only knew when I was right through them that the Duke was walking behind me, his

fat face all smiles. I suppose he thought it best to leave too! The Regent came and saw me this evening and was very stiff and formal, and told me I was never again to interfere with State affairs or he would leave me without warning.

" 'I will not have my hand forced like this,' he declared. 'Your Majesty must understand as much.'

"Just as he was going I managed to ask the one thing I wanted to know so badly, and that was where Count Damien had gone. He stopped and did not answer for a moment and I felt quite frightened. Then he said: 'You have perhaps a right to ask and know. He has gone to South America. If Your Majesty really desires to help me you will not speak again of him or my family affairs, they are not caluculated to assist my public duties.'

"It sounded almost worse when he spoke than it does written, but I think he is just so dreadfully angry with everybody that he can't be nice. Still I would rather have *him* about cross and black than the Duke, all smiles and fat and pillowy!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE CLOUD LIFTS

THE most inexplicable thing concerning the Prince in these days is his apparent neglect of his youngest brother, on whom he had once lavished so great a care and devotion. Max continued to live at Arenzano under the charge of a tutor who, whatever may have been his qualifications when he undertook his duties, quickly lost them when left to the uncontrolled liberty of his life in the Castle. In the matter of strict routine he was possibly conscientious. But he also appears to have considered his duties terminated with the hours of study. Max, who in all his life had never been alone, now found himself left entirely to his own resources. He remains a lonely little figure, too proud to make friends of the faithful servants who surrounded him, too loyal to complain to the few approachable friends of any shortcomings in his brother's arrangements for him, and too reticent even to show his own unhappiness.

The change from the loving comradeship of former days to this bleak solitude must have been a bewildering grief to him. That the Prince was oblivious to it affords the fullest measure of his shut-in misery and changed spirit.

One must accept that his capacity for hate had for the

time closed the doors on his capacity for love. Max was only another harassing charge, of whom he heard little but complaints; for Caprille, too indolent to exercise discipline or inculcate obedience himself, stored up a pretty collection of little misdemeanors to lay before the Prince on his brief visits, and left his pupil to accept the sharp reprimand and punishment, or make excuses as he liked. It was not Max's way to make excuses, and the consequence was that before there was time to re-establish a good relationship with his brother and once adored hero, the Prince would have returned to Cardozza and the old round began again.

With this explanation one turns to Cellino's diary with thankfulness for the first glimmer of light in the general darkness.

II

From Cellino's Diary

"April 15th, 1836.

"As so often happens when we are thinking that the blackness will never lift, Heaven has been merciful. The misery of these past three years can never be adequately told, nor need it, but I think it can never again shut down on us in the same way. This is what has happened, and it is a grateful task to record it.

"I had seen very little of Count Max lately, though he is much alone, but he invites no one's confidence and, child as he is, I think no one would venture to force themselves on him.

"Important business was to bring the Prince down on the day before his birthday, that black anniversary which none of us dare now remember. Count Max came to me on the evening before his brother was expected. He sat and talked of fishing, of the depleted heronry, and then suddenly said:

"'I wonder if the Prince will come early or late to-morrow.'

"I confessed my inability to guess, but asked why.

"'He could not be so very angry about anything on his birthday, could he?'

"I could not truthfully say I thought it would make any difference, so I only answered that I did not think the Prince would like it referred to. He caught my meaning with surprising sharpness.

"'Nothing can happen this year. There is no one left for it to happen to.'

"It came over me in a flash that there was still himself if the black fate that stalks them was not satiated.

"Count Max looked out of the window.

"'Monsieur Caprille never seems to think I might like to see Paul and not be scolded,' he murmured.

"This was the nearest thing to a complaint I had ever heard him utter.

"The next morning I saw him go off to the forest about six o'clock and wondered how he had got a holiday.

"The Prince arrived about five in the evening, in a very grim mood. About six o'clock Beppo came and asked if I had seen his young master. I thought it well to be cautious and merely admitted I had not seen him since the morning. He told me anxiously that no one else had seen him either, that Monsieur Caprille had been in a bad temper all day, and had now complained to the Prince, who had spoken furiously to him, and ordered that the little Count was to be sent to him directly he returned.

"'And,' finished Beppo, 'would to all the saints he would return, though I fear he will have poor welcome from His Highness.'

"I could not help feeling the same, and went several times to the top of the Keep to see if I could see him coming.

"It was nearly seven o'clock when Madellena (the nurse) came and spoke out the dreadful fear that had lay on our hearts.

" 'The black day is at hand!' she cried, 'and he is all that is left.'

"I quieted her somewhat fiercely, for there is no sense in uttering these things.

"A suggestion that search should be made for the child was angrily negatived by His Highness.

"On my own account I sent out to the forestry yard and bade Martin be ready, and one or two foresters volunteered to brave the Prince's wrath and go and seek. At last Madellena could bear it no longer. She forced her way straight into the Prince's presence, and there burst out into hot speech, calling him cruel and heartless and faithless to his face, and reminding him fiercely of the promise he had made to his dead mother. Women are strangely brave beings! He heard her to the end and then, curtly, gave the order, to seek.

"By that time the whole band of men were ready, and started before even the Great Bell, with its ominous signal, was echoing over the forest like a voice of doom. Father Pierre came down from the monastery at the sound of it, and I told him what had happened and how the Prince sat within and would not move. He thought for a few minutes and then said he would go and pray in the chapel, and as we parted, he added: 'Pray also Cellino, for there is more at stake to-night than even a child's life. I think a man's soul hangs in the balance!'

"They told me His Highness was now on the terrace and had asked for me. Yet when I joined him he asked no questions though he kept me with him. We walked the terrace to and fro in silence, times without number, and now and then stood still to listen. The silence of the forest and

the night chilled one. There was a thin little moon over the distant lake, making a poor path of light, but in the forest it would mean nothing. 'Another hour,' I thought, 'and the black anniversary will dawn!' It was that which hung so heavy over us, crushing our hope to earth.

"Suddenly His Highness turned and went in. I saw him cross the great Court and enter the Chapel. There was Father Pierre, and there, could he reach it, was help! I knew that, save for the one sad service of our dear Count Sylvestro's Requiem Mass, he had never crossed the Chapel threshold since our grief began. No, nor, if report spoke truly, had he sought mercy of Heaven. I remembered that Father Pierre had said, 'A man's soul might be at stake!'

"I went out by the great entrance gates to look up the road. It was quite silent, only as I listened I could hear far away the long empty call of the seekers, a mere thread of sound against the roof of the night.

"There was the shadow of the forest, the shadow of the Castle behind me and the shadow of the night with only that little crescent moon to light the void. I found myself praying for I know not what. The little Count—the Prince —it seemed all one!

"The first band of seekers came back silently and heavily. I noticed that M. Caprille was amongst them. I heard them speak of the lake, and of dragging the shallows; they were even getting ready the things when a footstep was amongst us, just as the last clanging message of the bell tolled out. It was the Prince. He saw what they were at and turned sharply away; but not before I had seen his face in the light of the lanterns, and it was not the face of the man who had gone into the Chapel a little while back. I had feared him then. I could weep for him now!

"He went off alone carrying a little lantern. I watched

him crossing from shadow to open space for a time; then he was lost to sight.

"What happened afterwards I learned from Count Max himself.

"He knew himself to be in disgrace with his tutor but thought that if he could avoid meeting his brother till his birthday had actually come, he might not be so angry with him. He played truant, meaning to get back late or even stay out all night, and only return before M. Caprille would be about, when he would have a chance of seeing the Prince alone. He made for the far corner beyond the lake and spent a happy morning and forenoon in haunts which he had not visited for three years, places denied to him without an elder brother in charge. Then he came to the Fuchira Pit, which is a big cup-like hollow in the woods round which the Barrier runs. It is a part wherein, until this very season, never wolf had been found. There was here a big tree which hung out over the Pit. It grew outside the Barrier but projected temptingly over the other side, by reason of its partial uprooting in a recent storm. It would have tempted any boy. He crept out along the trunk and was settling himself amongst the branches when it fell, right into the Pit, pinning him down under it. He could not free himself by any effort. He tried to dig a hole under his legs with his knife, but could not reach far enough. So there he lay and his only hope was that he would at last hear the bell sounding, and know they were seeking him. It was fortunate that the child knew nothing of the wolf-lair which was within half a mile of the Pit.

"So there he lay through the dusk into the night which falls early, under the trees, and he tried to invent ways of passing the time. He built castles of beech-mast, and once a squirrel came so near him that he touched it. Mostly, he told me, he thought about Raphael, and pretended he

was Raphael and must not be silly and fancy he was thirsty. The thought of it and his quiet even little voice, as he told me, made my heart feel sick. The courage of the child! Presently he must have fallen asleep or become unconscious, for when the seekers were nearest him he never heard them, and by some mischance they never went down to this extreme corner; still the child might have heard their calls had he been awake.

"It was late when he woke suddenly, hearing something scuttle through the undergrowth that seemed too big for a fox, though he told himself it was a fox. After that, while he was telling me these things he was silent for a bit.

"It was very dark and the time was very long, he said, but at last he heard some one calling for away, and then something moved quite close to him, but the call came nearer and nearer, and he recognized the Prince's voice, and answered it. Then there was the flash of a lantern, and his brother slid down the bank to him.

" 'He just asked me if I were hurt,' Max said, 'and then he pushed and pushed, and presently he moved the branch which held me, but at first I did not feel any different. He picked me up and said I was not to speak, and carried me away quite quietly. I wondered if he were very angry. When we were across the Barrier he laid me down and felt me all over. My ankle was broken and he tied it up. I tried to explain and—then I knew he wasn't angry.'

"The little Count ended his story somewhat lamely but I, who met the Prince first as he carried back his dear burden in the cold dawn, understood, for I had seen tears on the set grey face. 'You can ring the Found Bell,' he said over his shoulder, as he went by us, and soon it rang its good note out over the forest just stirring in the soft light. When the child was asleep and peace reigned I saw him come out again and go into the forest, for had not each one

of my young lords his own particular spot where he sought comfort and healing at need, in the shadows of the forest!

"Sunrise found him at the monastery; I heard that from Father Pierre, who had himself returned there when the suspense was over. Caprille left at noon. I do not know what passed, but if harsh words were uttered they were the only harsh ones that passed the Prince's lips that day.

"His Highness told me that night that when the Count was recovered, he would go to Cardozza with him.

"So I shall lose all my young Counts but it is the right thing. He seemed to know the selfish regret in my heart, for he put his hand on my shoulder in the old way, and said:

" 'I shall be leaving more and more in your hands, Cellino, and more power too, for I do not want my visits here to be all work as they have been.'

"Sunday.

"The Prince attended High Mass to-day, and a special Thanksgiving was offered for undeserved mercies."

III

The Prince returned to the capital and there is nothing to denote that his secretaries or servants found appreciable change in their exacting master. Yet it is only reasonable to conclude that their service was a little easier or a little less fearsome. Nor does the diary of the Queen show any radical alteration in life. The Prince remained a busy, overworked man, irritable and prone to violent language which, however, distressed his fellow-workers less than the savage remoteness of the worst days.

IV

The Diary of Queen Tessa (continued)

"April 30th.

"I had not seen the Prince for some days till this morning.

I heard he was at Arenzano. When he came he did not stay long. I thought he looked different somehow, but I can't say in what way. I asked him if I might have Alicia Rutzen to stay with me again, and he said 'No'. It is very unkind of him, he can't know how dull I am.

"The weather is dreadful again. Wet and cold. There is nothing to do. Marie is on a visit and I don't really like Madelaine. I want Alicia. When the Regent insisted that she should go in March, he would give me no reason except that she was not of sufficient 'birth' to be a lady-in-waiting, and he could not have her staying indefinitely at the Court in no capacity whatever. The Duchess was ever so pleased. She hates the Rutzens and thinks them quite 'bourgeois,' but I like them ever so much and I love going to their house, which I was told I mustn't do. They are very rich and have everything pretty and bright. I do think the Regent unkind.

"May 2nd.

"I met Alicia Rutzen to-day and I've been to see her. Why shouldn't I do what I like sometimes?

"I was feeling dreadfully depressed this afternoon and I told Madelaine that we would go shopping, and on the way home I told her I had lost my purse in a shop and asked her to go back for it (I had left it on purpose!), and I would wait at the Ormorno Arcade and listen to the music till she came. But when I got to the Ormorno I got out and sent the carriage away, saying I would walk home with the Countess. As soon as it drove off, I ran round to the Rutzens. It *was* nice to hear people laughing again and being gay. I stayed till six and then Reny Rutzen and his sister brought me back.

"Madelaine was having hysterics! Luckily they had not told the Prince, so when I had changed my things and put on a really nice frock, I went down and asked to see him, for I knew he did not leave the Palace till late. I told him where

I had been, and I felt horribly frightened—with reason! He was most dreadfully—not *angry* but nasty! He said the Duchess had better go out with me in future. After a bit I interrupted him and said that being a Queen wasn't much fun. It seemed to mean having all the nice things knocked out of life, and that if I didn't sometimes hear people laugh I should forget how to do it! He was quiet for a long while, and presently he said in quite a different voice that he was afraid he had forgotten many things he ought to remember, and I must forgive him. One thing was that laughter was my right, and he asked me lots of questions as to whom I liked in the Court, and whom I didn't like; and in the end he said he would see that I had someone younger about me.

"'Someone should have told me, little Queen,' he said with a sigh. 'I didn't mean to neglect you.' Then I sat down on the rug and coaxed him a little as one can sometimes, and presently he smiled. It is quite a long time since I saw him smile like that, really nicely. Reny Rutzen is only a silly boy after all!"

For some time the diary contains nothing of special interest. There are hints of Court intrigues, of various bids for the Queen's favor, but she seems to hove retained her independence of mind and made no intimate friends. The Rutzens' name is not mentioned, so one supposes youthful companionship was sought in other quarters. The Regent continues to rise or fall in her favor according to his pliability to her moods and desires. Not an easy young lady to control, one gathers. It is very notable that the young Count Max was kept from the Court. It is so marked a fact that it can hardly have been accidental. The Prince was evidently determined that the odium heaped on him for his retention of office should find no cause for repetition in

his one remaining brother. He remained at the Orensē Palace under the immediate care of the Prince. But for all that, the boy's life continued to be lonely, and the Prince's humor was still sadly at the mercy of small events.

It is not difficult to imagine that after a strenuous day's work, punctuated with the petty concerns of the Palace and the misdoings of the troublesome Queen, the Prince had little time or inclination to consider with patience the requests and needs of Count Max. His irritability became more marked as his deep hatred died down, but his petulance was alternated with fits of sharp remorse and affection towards Max, which probably caused that reticent young spirit more embarrassment than the petulance itself. But Max's loyalty to his brother grew in proportion with his recognition of his brother's difficult life, so that at the age of sixteen we find him already a personage in the Orensē household. If a difficult domestic question must be carried to the ears of the Prince, or if a servant made an overwhelming blunder, or if any of those petty troubles which make up the existence of most people must be reported, it was Count Max who was asked to broach the matter: Count Max who would offer the possible explanation or excuse and who listened quite unmoved to a stormy tirade, and would quietly return to his point when it died down, and who would finally convey a probably softened version of the verdict to the anxious offender.

Little wonder that the boy was old for his age, grave and self-reliant, and with far too keen an appreciation of men's motives for his years. He was of a very different temperament from his brother, and no doubt his natural control and reserve were strengthened by his upbringing, and his powers of affection and loyalty stiffened by the test through which they passed. Entirely devoid of the restless ambition of his brother, his sole desire seems to have been to perform his

allotted task with decency and efficiency. A man to be depended upon, who never failed a friend or abused an enemy, and who to the end of his days thoroughly deserved his greatest critic's verdict of a "very perfect gentleman."

One gets very occasional glimpses of the boy in some letters of one of the Prince's private secretaries who was related, one gathers, to Father Pierre, the Prince's confessor. He appears to have been a man of integrity and devotion, and one could wish his letters had been more discursive and frequent. But his reticence over the internal affairs of the Palace Orensē was generally of a praiseworthy character from the point of view of his employers. His correspondent is a lady whose relationship to him is vague.

"You ask me," writes Carlos Dermier, "for news of the little Count. He is not so very little now considering he attained his sixteenth year. The occasion of his birthday supplies an incident which may satisfy your curiosity. I knew it was his birthday merely because the Prince had commissioned me to take a box for the Opera for that evening for him, as he intended taking his brother as a treat. However, the day from a business point of view was not propitious, and at eight-thirty the Count came in to ask me if I thought his brother was returning at all that evening. Before I could reply, the Prince rushed in, demanding certain papers, and saying he must go to the Senate at once. The Count ventured to remind him of his previous engagement to him, and he received none too gentle an answer. Our Prince is a little hasty at times as you may have gathered, though most of us know that (as they say in England) his bark is worse than his bite! He whirled me off with him and when we returned at midnight he was handed a note which, having read, he flung down with some anger.

"The Count had apparently taken his birthday treat into

his own hands and gone to the Opera alone. The Prince was mightily displeased, and when the young man returned he was fallen on tooth and nail. I happened to be in an adjoining room putting some papers away and could not go without betraying my presence, but I heartily wished myself absent or in a position to defend him. When the storm quieted I heard his even voice saying, 'I think, sir, it is a great mistake to have a birthday, almost as great a mistake as getting born!' I give you my word, Elise, that a lump came into my throat. At his age such a sentiment was pitiful, and the more so because of his unboyish dignity. There was a silence and then the Prince called him back, and I slipped away. This week-end the Prince flung over his appointments recklessly and took the Count to Arenzano, which, I think, is more to his liking than many Operas."

Later in the year, about April, he writes:

"Count Max has just gone on a visit to Count Madian's, whose son is his own age. It is strange how one misses him, quiet as he is. I fancy the Prince already regrets letting him go, but it will be a good change, for it is not very lively here for the boy.

"I believe if I made the attempt I could secure a political post, but I have decided not to think of it. For one thing I know the Prince would have difficulty in getting a new man into his ways, and fresh work might eventually move me out of touch with him, which would be cold comfort in return for possible social advantages. No, I am the Prince's servant and hope to remain so. Do you blame me for lack of ambition? I think not. I know your own feeling towards the Prince too well. I think his ambitions are enough for both of us!"

Carlos Dermier indeed remained with the Prince in the same capacity till the day of his master's death, as we shall see.

CHAPTER XX

A BARGAIN

ON the 14th of April, 1838, the fatal birthday of the Prince, he returned from his usual early ride, and in the ordinary routine, his chocolate and private correspondence were brought in together. As he turned over his letters he was arrested by the sight of a handwriting, long strange to him.

He drew out the envelope, fingered it irresolutely, set it down and gave cursory attention to the remaining letters. When these were disposed of, he opened the disturbing missive. Dermier, seated at a distant table, noted that the paper shook in his hand as he drew it out.

The letter ran:

"Your Highness,

"How right was Jean Jacques Rousseau when he insisted every man should have a trade. Not only does my training in dealing with sick animals earn me a living wage, but it brings me into touch with persons otherwise inaccessible to the people! Only last week a stable-man crony of mine had called me into consultation on a sick wolf-hound (of the Arenzano breed, I believe), the property of a Romanzian gentleman who has a hunting lodge in Zinnia. While I was

tending my patient the owner strolled out to see my operations, accompanied by his friend, the Count de Riva. I was, however, too absorbed in my task to notice either of them. There being no one present but Zinnian illiterates, they talked freely in their own language. Riva boasts an intimacy between his son and the youngest scion of the House of Arenzano. It is arranged that they join the Guild together. 'The Regent will nominate him,' the other man supposed. 'No,' said Riva. 'His Highness does not favor the Guild greatly, but I've had a strong hint the boy was to join, so I thought you'd stand sponsor. That's why I mention it.' It was of course not the act of a gentleman to listen to a private conversation, but fortunately I do no come under that category and thought that, supposing your rectitude did not spurn gossip from so tainted a source, you might find matter of interest in the above. You will be pleased to hear the hound recovered.

"Yours obediently,

"Raphael Salvator."

"Raphael Salvator," so it was signed! Yet the writing and the wording were without doubt those of Raphael d'Arenzano!

The Prince sat staring at it. It was the only communication, the only sign of his brother's existence, he had had since Raphael disappeared from the little inn at Forresti, Sylvestro never having ventured to tell him of his solitary interview with Raphael in Paris.

He had never imagined he could be so horribly shaken by the sight of that once dear handwriting. He had renounced his hate but it had not occurred to him that with the negative forgiveness he had so painfully achieved the old deep affection had stirred in what he had thought was the sleep of death, and at this first call awoke in the silence of its tomb.

He tried presently to believe that it was the news the

letter conveyed that so troubled his spirit, and immediately the real import of that reached his brain through the sharp pain of the first shock, he was moved to direct action and the spell was broken.

Action was necessary and immediately necessary. Indeed, the cold sweat broke on his forehead at the mere thought that he might be too late and that his carelessness had left Max open to the insidious attack of the enemy. It was not enough to forbid Max to join. The Prince did not so underrate his enemy. The fact that Rivoli had remembered the boy's existence and had planned to gain him, knowing well his nomination would be rejected by the Prince, was guarantee that Rivoli had not yet exhausted his hate nor his means of revenge.

He must have a clear understanding with Rivoli. He never doubted in his heart that Raphael's downfall, Sylvestro's death and Damien's disgrace were the work of this man, but the means by which they had been achieved was too intricate and the results too incontestable for him to gain any advantage by open warfare. This, however, was another matter; it was something to prevent, not to avenge.

It required all his will to chain his thoughts to the day's business, yet when at last he left the Palace and turned his face homeward, he found his decision made, his plan of action mapped out with ruthless clarity.

II

The passing years found Rivoli silently gathering power and watching with jealous eyes the triumphs of the great Minister. The wave of reform swept on, he neither opposed nor assisted it. He waited, he scarcely knew for what. He had his spies in Council Room and Palace. He watched the developement of the Queen and he felt he could afford to wait.

The entries in the little locked book continued to be made and very few were erased. They were the gold which the miser hoarded up, over which he pored in secret.

The Guild of St. Augustine became more and more a mere picturesque pose, but the number of members did not fall off; Rivoli saw to that, for the day would dawn when every member would be used to his full value, and the sum total of that value must mean the price of a Crown for Rivoli.

Because he knew nothing of honor or loyalty himself, he was sufficiently a fool to doubt the honor and loyalty of the Regent. He believed that in the end the Crown of Romanzia would lie between them, and it would be for him who was richest in power. He was seeing to it that he was the richer of the two, and meanwhile he waited on circumstances.

It was a mere chance observation that reminded him of the youngest d'Arenzano. To enroll him as a member of the Guild meant to hold a hostage which the Prince could not disregard, and he set about it in his usual secret way.

Once Count Max's name had come up for nomination to the Guild it would be difficult for the Prince to combat his acceptance without raising an open scandal, and Rivoli knew him to be averse to that course. He could prove nothing, so Rivoli argued, and accusations would be but to cast mud on his own name and House. Riva was one of his "assets," the young Count's friendship providential. Rivoli felt secure.

He was thinking it over and the possible advantage he would have in the future, when a servant entered with a card.

His Highness the Prince d'Arenzano desired to see him.

Rivoli guessed instinctively the harvest would need careful nursing if it were to be garnered, and his fertile brain

seized on new possibilities and fresh combinations which had hitherto merely floated as phantoms before his vision.

The Prince was in the salon. He made no pretence at ceremonious civility.

"It suited me to see you here. Can we talk unheard?" he said bluntly. Rivoli, after a moment's reflection, led him to the upstairs room where he spent most of his day.

The Prince laid aside his cloak and, after an almost imperceptible pause, took the proffered chair, though to sit in this man's presence was hateful to him.

"I have come," he said, with sharp precision that scorned all diplomacy, "to ask what is your price to leave my brother, Count Max, free—and safe?" He said the last words shortly. He was not there to bring accusations or to argue over irrefutable things. Rivoli's desire, on the contrary, was to play with him, to pretend incomprehension, to drag from him the very accusations he could not prove. His desire, even his will, were so; but he failed to put it to more than momentary execution.

"You are alluding to your brother's nomination to membership of the Guild?"

"Yes; I can refuse consent, of course, but I recognize the futility. What is your price?"

"What will you pay?"

"I cannot be vendor and buyer at once," was the cold response.

"I was wondering in which capacity you desired to figure!" It was his last bid for discussion. The Prince flashed out at him with a grim passion that left not a rag of pretence behind which he could shelter himself.

"Listen, sir. The Guild of St. Augustine was founded for purposes for which it is not carried on now. I have reason to know that quite other concerns lie masked behind its activity but, because of my old oath, I have left it alone.

Trouble and disaster have fallen on my House and I believe —and some day I shall know—that it lies at your door and your hand has wrought this destruction. The extent of my belief and trouble you can gauge from the fact that I am here and that I ask you what is your price for my brother's freedom and safety."

Rivoli considered. A project had leaped to his mind, so daring and so fascinating, so complete a safeguard in an uncertain future, so sure a step to his own crooked ends, that even his cold eyes betrayed a glint of excitement. He leaned his chin on his hand and looked at his visitor, and the longer he looked the more he liked his project.

The Prince on his part waited silently. He was not unreasonable, the man must have time to jot up the maximum value of his schemes.

He was prepared to pay a heavy price. The one thing he could not face was the daily torture of knowing Max was at the mercy of his enemy, of living in agonizing doubt as to when and how the last human joy in his life would be torn from him.

So they waited.

"The Guild has no need of money."

The Prince shrugged his shoulders. "The Guild—possibly not."

"Nor have I. I do not spend my own income."

The Prince took out his watch.

"I have no great time to spare, sir," he said coldly, "and I make no other offer."

"You have not made one yet," retorted Rivoli calmly. "As I understand, you are apprehensive that some harm may come to your youngest and sole remaining brother, if he should conform with the usages of society and join the Guild of St. Augustine—or—if he does not. The idea is fantastic, but if the Guild can profit by it, it is not for me

to stand in the way. The price asked is your renewed pledge to the service of the Guild in the capacity of one of the Council of Three, who are the actual controllers of it in every country where it has so far penetratd."

He leaned back with a faint smile on his thin lips. He had the satisfaction of knowing he had taken his adversary by surprise.

The Prince stared at him with knitted brows.

"What do you propose to gain by that?" he demanded, curtly.

"The Guild will gain the advice and support of an able brain, and assistance in its foreign connections."

"And immunity in its national crimes!" put in the other swiftly. "I understand. It will be a trial of our respective wits to outwit each other! What security can you offer me that your part of the bargain will be kept?"

"Our affairs will be open to you—you are all-powerful in Romanzia—you could destroy us with a word."

"I doubt it at this minute. Nevertheless, that fact, in conjunction with a signed agreement and my own intentions, will do. I accept your terms."

Rivoli in his turn was surprised: he had expected harder and longer bargaining and suspicion seized him. Paul saw it. He looked him in the face and spoke slowly.

"If I choose to pay a fantastic price for my brother's freedom it is my own concern. I cannot carry out my task if I am to be harassed with cares for his safety. It is also my own concern if I choose to join forces with the man I believe to have destroyed all that was valuable to me in the world. I do not pretend to pay willingly. If I followed my impulse, however, and destroyed the Guild root and branch, I should tear to pieces most of the work already done. The alternative is this bargain, unnatural and iniquitous from my point of view, but I shall adhere loyally to it so long as you

do the same. On the day that any misfortune, in which I can detect other forces than the direct hand of God, falls on my brother the bargain between us is cancelled, and I shall break you if I pull down my life's work to do it!"

The deep passionate sincerity of the words and tone left even Rivoli satisfied as to the Prince's intention, however little he could appreciate the motives. He made the initial error of taking the Prince's ambitions as the driving force behind him, while his affections were really the motive power.

Rivoli rose and placed pen, ink and paper on the table between them.

"Do you draft the agreement or do I?" he asked.

"I dictate it."

Rivoli was a self-controlled man, but it crossed his mind to consider how long he could endure subjection to that imperious tone: nevertheless, he complied.

The curious document thus dictated and written was one of the most striking pieces of evidence in the trial, and it ran as follows:

> "In the year 1838, April 14th, this Agreement between Paul Landuoc Prince d'Arenzano, Regent of the Kingdom of Romanzia, and Luigi Rivoli, Doctor of Science, President of the Guild of St. Augustine, Romanzia.
>
> "On the part of Luigi Rivoli: To refuse for nomination or membership of the Guild of St. Augustine, in any country or under any form, the person of Count Max d'Arenzano;
>
> "To hold the person of the said Count sacred in mind and body and worldly interests—free from all obligations to, or knowledge of, the Guild of St. Augustine.
>
> "On the part of Paul d'Arenzano, Prince and Minister:

"To renew his connection with the Guild of St. Augustine, taking the final vows of the Inner Order, and to become one of the Council of Three who constitute the supreme authority of the Order.

"To promote the work of social reformation for which the Order was founded and to propagate the cause of Government Reforms in all lands where the Guild shall penetrate, and to hold sacred the persons of those in authority in the Society so long as this Agreement holds good.

"Signed here at 26 Dellia Street, Cardozza, in the presence of each other.

"Luigi Rivoli.
"Paul d'Arenzano."

This extraordinary document was not drafted with ease or without contention. The Prince drew up the first Clause without hesitation or loophole for discussion. It remains a clear indication as to his sole purpose in carrying through the transaction. Rivoli did his utmost to force a different construction on the words or at least treat them as a mere mask to deeper intentions, but the face value was there, plain and unmistakable, and it is hardly likely that a man as astute as Rivoli would have failed to force clearer language, had the bargain been intended to cover further ground. The second Clause was suggested by Rivoli himself, and contended for step by step; even in the final document there are erasures, and one can imagine that the final sentence, enforcing the true condition on the whole, was inserted much against Rivoli's will. Still in the end the document was twice written and signed, each man retaining a copy.

When they had finished, the Prince stood up.

"I should like the name of our colleague," he said drily.

"He is a mere figure-head, I imagine, since you do not consult him."

"I have no doubt of his gratification," returned Rivoli calmly. "He—has long wished to secure your services—" He paused.

"He has long wished to secure your services—" He paused.

"His name is Christian Remair.—Minister of the Interior in Zinnia."

Rivoli scored a marked triumph. Prince d'Arenzano was utterly dumbfounded. He had never seriously believed that Savola's plans for European penetration were more than dreams. He knew Remair personally; he had had official dealings with him, and this revelation showed him as nothing else could have done, that he had committed himself to a wider matter than he had anticipated, but he allowed himself no second thoughts. He had forced Rivoli's hand—they must now sink or swim together. He believed himself strong enough to control his enemy—and Max was safe!—But at the price of his brother's honor!

CHAPTER XXI

THE RETURN OF RAPHAEL

I

FROM the diary of Leslie Thornton:

"March 8th, 1839.

"A most extraordinary thing has happened, an event so distressing that I can hardly endure to consider it calmly.

"Count Raphael is found!

"I do not know whether the Prince ever made any great effort to trace him. I believe Henry Carfax came across him in Warsaw once but so far as we are concerned, since Count Sylvestro's death Raphael has been a lost man to his friends.

"I thought of him often with regret, to my surprise. Life seemed the poorer lacking his vitality. And I know the King has never been the same since the catastrophy. Only his marriage has linked him on to life again and human interests.*

"The King had been to Raddura for a fortnight to watch the manœuvers. Two days ago the daily courier brought the usual letter from the Countess. Having read it,

*King Augustine, it will be remembered, contracted a morganatic marriage with a young artist, a Scotch lady. She was created Countess Galamo and continued her artistic career with great devotion. The marriage was a very happy one. The King never seems to have contemplated any other alliance.

the King hastily summoned me to share his surprise and suspicions. The Countess stated that she was visiting the Public Gallery of Art, and that in a corner of a room she saw a man seated, who was the living model she required for the picture on which she is engaged. Being the Countess —she spoke to the man and, after some difficulty, persuaded him to accept the rôle of model. He appeared content, she said, till she mentioned he must come to the Palace; then he quite abruptly refused. But it is not easy to refuse the Countess anything on which she has set her heart. In the end she succeeded. This was the day after the King's departure. Her model turned up regularly and she appears to have succeeded in making him share her lunch—she has beautiful tact in these things. She declares he was not only ill and suffering but actually starving. Also that he is unmistakably a gentleman. She took him into the King's private room to see a picture, and was confounded by the extraordinary fact that he seemed quite familiar with his surroundings and asked where a certain portrait had been placed. It *had* stood in the King's room, the Countess knew, but she did not know it had been removed because it was too poignant a souvenir of Raphael d'Arenzano. At all events she wrote to ask the King if he could elucidate the mystery of her model—a gentleman suffering from some terrible illness, knowing English, French, Romanzian and Zinnian perfectly, acquainted with the Palace, in appearance tall, thin beyond description, grizzled hair, and a haggard face marked with a long scar running from brow to chin! Did it convey anything to the King?

"The King, having read this, stopped and looked at me and I looked at him.

" 'Ill, starved—posing as a model—my God, Thornton, what does it mean? I'm going back to-night.'

"We returned to find the Countess in deep distress because

her model had disappeared. He had not merely failed to turn up but the address he had given her proved fictitious! Her picture was unfinished and—he was so desperately ill! I can imagine her kind, generous heart reproaching her for not doing the impossible.

"We set secret enquiries on foot at once. Mantos was searched through and through, and yesterday we found him, in a wretched lodging in the lowest part of the city. The King insisted on going himself, though Heaven knows it was no place for him to see. I waited outside. When he rejoined me I hurried him to the carriage, for his face was not for the passers-by. 'He will accept nothing, have nothing, say nothing, Thornton,' moaned the King. 'He forbids my telling anyone. He says he's dying, that he's been examined by the greatest doctors as a medical treasure for the public hospitals. They give him three weeks. He declared his money will last till then and that he prefers dirt and squalor. Oh, the very lies proclaimed him Raphael! Apparently he deliberately gambled away all his money. He owned he was glad to see me—I don't think he lied then. He apologized for taking advantage of the Countess's kindness. He said the temptation to see the house of a friend was too strong. Thornton, it will break my heart. He swears by our friendship I can do nothing for him but leave him alone to a deliberately chosen fate!' The King was cruelly distressed. I gathered, however, that the poor man had exacted no promise as to other people's proceedings, and directly I had given the King into the Countess's keeping, I dispatched a letter to the Prince with a plain statement of facts, and now am waiting results. If the Prince does not send or come I shall take matters into my own hands. I thought of sending to the Duchess and then remembered hearing that her friends have taken her to a little health resort in Germany to recruit after some illness, and her

little son was in Cardozza with friends. For our purpose she is inaccessible. In any case it is the Prince's business."

Thus far Thornton conveys the story of Count Raphael's reappearance on the scene, but his diary alone gives but inadequate significance to what followed. Further evidence and traditions have to be drawn upon before the full result of all this on the Prince can be properly appreciated.

II

Would the day never break!

Would the night never come!

Through a dirty pane of glass he could see vague glimpses of a cold spring sky, for away and remote from the chimney pots and grimy roofs. Somewhere out of this maze of ugliness a clean cold wind was sweeping across woods and hills, mountains and forests!

Forests!

Restlessly he turned on his pillow again for the intolerable pain was returning.

A wind that was cold and keen was so sweet a thing that it hurt to think of it. It was cold enough here. A chill draught laden with unclean odors swept the floor, the only sweeping it had. In the forest it would be gathering dead leaves into drifts, whirling them hither and thither, uncovering mosses and little green things—there the knotted roots of an old tree would stop them—it was not a tree, it was a man—immense, great with a wrath brewed in Hell, who mocked at him but, instead of using words stabbed him with looks that were as cruel as Death which would not come—

The long interminable blackness of pain fell on him, and presently, for a short while, came oblivion.

* * * * * *

At the top of the narrow street a carriage stopped and two men alighted. The quarter raised its dull eyes from its squalid misery and glared at them. One man was tall beyond the measure of ordinary men, and behind the harshness of his expression there gleamed a fever of impatience, and some passion that seemed to scorch the beholder.

"Here?" he questioned, harshly looking round.

His companion nodded.

"This is the street. It is better not to drive down, I will take you to the door and wait there."

The big man did not seem to hear; he strode down the dirty unpaved street and the children and sullen loiterers were for him non-existent.

"No. 18" was one of a series of dilapidated buildings holding probably three times its allowance of ill-fed, half-clothed, ill-living humanity. The door was closed, and so apparently were all the windows, though the east wind dancing down the street would have done better service than a broom for the inhabitants. On the step the big man paused. He looked as if physical nausea or some great fear had clutched him. It was the other who opened the door.

"The fourth floor. I will wait here till Your Highness requires me," said the first man quietly.

The visitor strode on up the rickety stairs, and the swarms of children playing there shrunk into dark corners and offered no unseemly jest, or dust-bin wit, to this intruder with the scorching eyes.

With his hand on the door he stopped. There were beads of perspiration on his forehead and his face was racked again with something that was fear and yet was not fear.

Then he went in. The hiding children saw him enter and saw him shut the door, and slipped down to tell "Mammy."

In the minute room with its stained pink walls and dirty

floor there was a table, with a basin on it and by it a fragment of soap, a razor, and a looking-glass of absurd dimensions. One might really think that the occupant of the stuffy little room had shaved, and even washed as a last act before flinging himself on the poor bed where he lay, still dressed, and covered with what by courtesy might be called a blanket. The hands that gripped its edge were clean and the starved face on the pillow was shaven after a fashion, shaven and washed!

On a rickety chair by the bed there was a glass of milk gone sour, and an empty medicine bottle.

The vistor gave a stifled groan and fell on his knees by the bed.

"Raphael! Raphael!"

The cry seemed to come with such extreme of agony that it found vibration in the unconscious form. The faintest movement was made.

He touched the cold hands and again called the same name.

The sick man opened his eyes and there was a light of recognition but no real consciousness.

"I thought you were never coming, Paul. Get me home. You must carry me back. It was a wolf—I thought you had forgotten me!"

"I never knew—I never guessed—I have come to take you home."

The words were indistinct, falling over each other. The sick man's eyes took a doubtful gleam. Fear sprang to them and he clutched at the hands that held him.

"The wolf of Arenzano! Paul, it cursed me—It's dragged me down into the pit! Ah! Who is it?"

Terror leaped to his eyes as recognition merged to full consciousness.

Feebly, yet with a strength one could hardly have looked

for, he fought off the hold on him and pushed back the embracing arms, struggling to maintain the hard biting anger against that piteous despair that assailed him.

"What! You have found me out and come to see me die! I am not to be spared even this! Well, are you content? Have I anything left of which you can rob me? Let me go, Paul, curse you, will you not even let me die in peace? Let me go!"

The other's head fell on his outstretched arms; yet he knew he must conquer himself or lose Raphael forever.

The cruel weak voice went on:

"Now you have seen, can't you go?—Go home and rejoice! I've paid my debt, more than paid it. Oh, my God! Am I to be spared nothing?"

The last cry was wrung from him by so poignant an agony that the pent up pains in the ghastly little room seemed to merge, soar and break, and through infinitely black silence came Paul's voice.

"Raphael, you must have some mercy on me now—later you shall say what you will. Even if you can find no forgiveness for me, yet for the sake of what has been, you will come back with me—Raphael—my brother!"

Raphael moved uneasily. Striding towards him through the grey moments was that renewal of pain. Could he face it alone again? He remembered the hour of wild regret after he had so madly flung off all chance of rescue from another friend. Suppose Paul took him at his word and went, and left him forever in outer darkness?

Mechanically his hand groped for the hand it had repulsed, and yet his unconquered soul fought against its own salvation to the end.

"Let relationship be dead! You've a right to take a dying tramp home with you, if you will, Highness! It's charity! Oh, don't be a fool, Paul!"

Then sharply he clutched his brother.

"Paul, Paul! Hold me a moment—stay anyhow till—it's gone!"

He lay there in his brother's arms hushed to silence as his enemy shut down on him and, so holding him, Paul, in the terrible tension, thought what must be done.

Presently, with a long sigh the clutch of the hands relaxed.

Paul laid him back.

"What is the landlady like?" he asked gruffly.

Raphael looked round wearily.

"Honest, I think—I paid her in advance. She brings me something when she remembers."

He made a feeble effort to drag up the thick fur-lined coat which was spread over him.

"I wondered why it was so warm," he murmured, and shut his eyes.

Paul went to the door. It did not occur to him that the stairs were very full when he opened the door, and very empty as he went down. On the ground floor he opened another door at random and came on a domestic scene of some violence. Having attracted the attention of the frowsy woman who proved to be the landlady, reputed honest, he demanded of her hot water and certain things to be at once taken to the lodger on the fourth floor, and handed over more coin than she had seen in her own hand in all her poor life. Then he went outside. The patient watcher was still at the door.

"I want a doctor, Thornton—and I want a decent room found at once—no, not at the Palace. And is it possible to find a carriage here in Zinnia which could take us to Cardozza without too great vibration?"

Thornton nodded, and said:

"I have small doubt of it. The doctor first. While he

sees him I'll find a room. The best man procurable will be Morello."

"The King's physician?"

"Yes."

The Prince seemed to conquer some repulsion. Morello would have known Raphael in the old days, but his skill was undeniable.

"You can fetch Morello," he said with an effort and went inside again.

III

So Count Raphael d'Arenzano returned home to die in the arms of the brother who had killed him, for his illness appears to have been attributed directly to the wound dealt him in the duel. One gathers that Count Max proved a most efficient support to the unhappy Prince at this crisis.

Count Raphael lived about six weeks. He was buried at Arenzano and one of the most beautiful monuments in the chapel there is a recumbent figure of him.

A strange, erring, disastrous life, yet since there were a few who loved him as devotedly as many feared him, there must have been some golden strands of virtue spun into the tangled web of his character.

Requiescat in pace.

CHAPTER XXII

THE QUEEN'S DIARY ENDS

I

WHETHER Prince d'Arenzano made a terrible mistake or not in linking himself afresh with the Guild of St. Augustine must ever remain a subject for controversy. The greatest of men are liable to errors; he could not foresee his failure to dominate the Inner Circle of the Guild any more than he could foresee to what lengths the mad enmity of Rivoli would carry him when in the distant future it was to be re-awakened from sleep. That however is a matter which does not come within the limits of this book.

For the time his contract with his enemy seems to have served his purpose. There was little political trouble and a wave of prosperity carried the country towards high achievement. It was only needful to establish the same into a habit rather than a bewildering miracle to bring one half of the Prince's dreams to fulfillment.

His greatest mistake at this period (1839) lies not in his dealings with the Guild but with a woman's soul and the elementary forces of human life.

The Queen must speak for herself.

The Queen's Diary Ends

"March, 1839.

"There had been some talk of my coming-out ball taking place after Easter, but all that is now cancelled. To-day the Duke di Florence came to me to say he was taking over some of the Regent's work for a time and trusted I would not hesitate to refer any question to him that I might find necessary. I do not think there is anything I could want to refer to him except why I have to, so I referred to that; and he told me with much wavering and hesitation that the Prince's brother, Count Raphael, had returned home and was very ill, and that the Prince as far as possible desired to be free to stay with him. 'It is only for a short time if report speaks truly,' the Duke assured me, as if he thought Count Raphael would undoubtedly hasten his death if his living incommoded me! Well, it gave me plenty to think about. I remembered all that I could of what I heard years ago and all the things no one has said since, and it comes to this, that if Count Raphael is back in Cardozza the Prince has forgiven him, and I'm glad because I always liked him, and I think it will be only kind to ask after him when I am driving out. Of course, I don't mind about my ball, but I wish sometimes I could get away and be an ordinary person and not a Queen—it isn't any fun at all.

"March 6th.

"I did stop at the Orensē Palace to-day though the Duchess, who was with me, nearly expired at the idea. 'Count Raphael had stood the journey better than had been expected,' was all I heard; but this evening Max came to see me. It was quite nice to see him again. He said just that the Prince thanked me greatly for enquiring; it was kind of me but I must not do it again. He—Max—would come and see me each day if I liked, and tell the Regent anything I particularly wanted him to know. Then I asked him to tell

me what had really happened. He said his brother was very ill indeed and Paul, hearing it, had gone and fetched him home. He could not live but they were glad to have him back. He talked for a little time and then he went away. He is so nice but he seems so much older than I am, and yet really I'm the older! I wish Count Raphael could get well.

"April 2nd.

"Count Raphael died last night. Max sent me word this morning. It seems very cruel. I think life seems cruel and horrible if one thinks about it at all. That is why I like the Rutzens. They don't let one think and they make it all amusing and nice. Why should people like my Regent and Max have dreadful things happening to them?

"April 3rd.

"I hear that the Duchess of Alquarto arrived yesterday morning, too late to see her husband. The first letter that was sent to her got lost. The second did not reach her in time as she had just left the place where she was staying. My ladies were talking about it and I heard someone say: 'It was probably a *providential* loss—and a more providential move on the part of the Duchess.' Well, I do not know the Duchess of Alquarto at all, but anyhow she belonged to Count Raphael and the Regent so I wasn't going to have horrid things said in my rooms, and I said to the lady who spoke: 'It is more probable that the Duchess is at this moment finding Providence very cruel; I should have liked to see Count Raphael myself, so it stands to reason his wife would wish to do so.' After that they said no more on the subject.

"April 9th.

"The Regent came to see me again today. He looked very sad, but all the stern hardness seems to have melted away. I talked all I could just to keep him. Sometimes he forgot to answer me and sat staring into the fire; and I

slipped my hand into his and said: 'It's nice to have you back, Regent dear.' He didn't push me away but held my hand a minute and said, 'I shall find plenty of occupation, thank God!' and I squeezed his to show I understood, and went on telling him silly little things. Presently he had to go, and he kissed my hand and said 'Thank you!' I don't know why. I'd done nothing, but I wish I could. I should like to take him away from all the things that hurt him and make him forget them.

"October 31st.

"Thursday tomorrow and The Ball! My fancy dress Ball at last! I am counting the hours to it. I've tried on my dress and it's lovely. I am going as the Empress Elizabeth of Zinnia and the dress is of cloth of silver embroidered with pinky orange roses, and a lace veil all sewn with diamonds and pearls, and I shall wear my own pearls. The Regent is going as John Theselus of Zinnia, who was *her* Regent. He'll look splendid. I really chose my dress because I felt that period would suit him splendidly and I knew he would match me. The ballroom is to be hung with chains of carnations and roses, all orange, pink, or cream. I wish to-morrow would come.

"November 1st.

"It's all over and I wish it could begin all over again! It was quite splendid but I do not want to remember anything or anyone but Paul! I call him that to myself always! It sounds so little to say, *he* was splendid but he was, he was! I danced first with him. We opened the Ball and I forgot the people and everything. There wasn't room in my mind for anything but the music and my splendid Prince. I never guessed real dancing could be so lovely. We passed a big glass and just for a moment I saw someone flitting in a silver dress and I did not know her face at all, then I realized it was me! He was so kind and took such care that

I should enjoy it all. He told me who I *must* dance with and who I *might!* We had the *Rometto* to open with, of course, but later I danced with him alone. It was hot in the rooms and he took me out into the orangery to get some air, after wrapping me in a cloak, and we talked. Now I come to think of it I never imagined the Regent could talk like that. He began by amusing me and making me laugh, and then he made me feel how I was enjoying myself, and how splendid it was to be alive, and I found myself saying all sorts of clever things to him . . . but it all ended far too soon, and when all the people had gone I walked through the rooms trying to think it was all beginning again. In the little blue drawing-room there was a fire and no lights, and as I sat there Paul came in . . . Somehow it was the very best bit of all, telling him about it. And then I suddenly wanted him to feel it was the best bit too, and that he should tell me how *he* enjoyed it. I made him say just how he thought I looked. Then I took off my cotillon favor and fastened it to the Order he wore, and my veil got caught in it and he had to undo it. I could not help looking up in his face and he looked down at me . . . Then quite quickly he turned away to the mantelpiece and lit the candles and said I must go to bed, play-time was over!

"Play-time! But it wasn't play then, it was being alive and I am sure he knew it.

"November 2nd.

"So now I am of age and am free of my Regent and can govern all alone if I like. How absurd! He will be First Minister of the Crown and President of the Council of State, at which he is supposed to represent my will. I don't think he'll do it at all. I asked him to make Marcus di Florence Minister of War or something else nice, and he wouldn't. It was the first thing I had asked him so I was rather angry. I couldn't even coax him to it. He thinks Marcus a silly

boy. Reny Rutzen is to be a gentleman-in-waiting, but Count Spario is my chief Equerry, which is tiresome. I wanted Max to be an Equerry and said so, but he wouldn't listen. I don't think I shall be allowed my own way any more than before, but it's even more fun trying to get it and I do sometimes succeed.

"February.

"I've got my way this time! I'm to go on a visit to Arenzano. The Count and Countess Orsena will be there and Marie. I am so looking forward to it—more than anything for months, and I think Paul is a little pleased too!

"February. Arenzano.

"My diary is getting very irregular. It's all nicer even than I expected and it's perfectly splendid seeing Paul rule everyone. I don't wonder he sometimes gets a little—well, 'irritable' with us at the Palace. Here his very slightest word is law. That's what I call being a King! It's all rather formal, of course, and I hardly see him except in company. The Countess is splendid but she has no idea of any world outside Orensē. The Prince won't let me play cards here, whatever I may do at home. There was a torchlight dance one night in the Great Courtyard. All the foresters danced. It was very pretty and made my feet ache to dance too, especially as Max was dancing beautifully. I asked Paul if he did not dance too, and he said, 'Not now.' So I told him My Majesty would be greatly pleased if he would! He did. He danced with a fine-looking peasant girl and I wished I was her! It was a forest dance, a slow and rather dignified one, and represented 'the waking of the forest,' I was told.

"February 19th.

"All the people left to-day but I coaxed this out of my First Minister and host. I am to stay on two days more, *'sans ceremonie,'* with only the cousin, the Count and

Countess and Marie. The fact is the air here is splendid and everyone sees how much better I am looking.

"February 19th.

"Since that last entry I have been having a queer time. Here I am still laid up and only just allowed to write. I'll put down what happened because there's no one to talk to. Marie is a dear but she tells Reny everything, I know.

"Well, on the 12th, Paul and Max and I went for a ride by ourselves into the forest. It was lovely and I had a heavenly horse—poor brute! We rode across a clearing and there was a thickish hedge and no gate, and Max said, 'Shall we go round?' And I said, 'No, it's jumpable.' Max looked at Paul, who said, 'That horse can take it all right; give him good rein, Madame.' So Max gave me a lead and cleared it easily and just as I started I heard him shout and then Paul—but it was too late. My horse jumped perfectly but there was a bit of rough ground on the other side and some loose hurdles about, and he came down on them, and I too, and the horse hurt its back and I fell on a stake, on my left shoulder. I don't know how they managed to get me off it, but it was Max who cut away my clothes and with handkerchiefs and things tied me up. Then while I lay on the ground and Paul bathed my face, I saw Max go up to the horse and he shot it. Then they talked and I felt I was falling, falling, falling. Presently Paul lifted me up and Max held me while he mounted and then between them they lifted me up in front of Paul, who held me in his arms and Max walked by the side, leading the horses. It was a long way—we had come miles—and I hardly knew how to bear the pain, but when it seemed just getting too bad for anything I looked up at Paul and *had* to pretend not to mind, when I saw how he cared. And then I forgot my hurt and just felt I had been all my life in his arms and wanted nothing else, not even for the pain to stop because I knew and

know now, that he cares and that I am *his* and no one else's. I did not mind anything after that so long as he was with me, and I should have behaved like a baby if he had gone. They wanted him to go when the doctor came, but I couldn't have stood it, so he stayed and knelt by me and held me, and that way I could pretend it didn't hurt, because I *had* to try and smile at him. I am getting all right again now but not allowed to use my left arm much. They are very kind. We have to return the day after to-morrow. I wish I could stay here always, I think everything would seem different. All sorts of things seem quite real and fine here, that seem only obscure in Cardozza. My Prince is not just a figure of speech; it is how they think of him. I can't explain it to myself but I understood best last Sunday. We all went to High Mass and I could see Paul from where I sat, and it came over me with a rush that all this isn't *to him* just a sort of thing one has to do, it's real and means something. I wished I could feel like that too, because it puts such a big space between us."

III

It is easy for the reader to see to what issue events were trending, but the reader has the advantage over the public of that day, who had no knowledge of the workings of the mind of their young Queen. It is impossible to do more than surmise how far the Regent himself was aware of the situation between himself and his Royal charge. It seems impossible he should have been blind to the possibilities; on the whole, one is inclined to think he chose to consider any such situation as fantastically unsuitable, something to be eliminated from the possible by fixed disregard of its existence.

Yet great posts and Royal Crowns are but accessories to humanity; they do not alter fundamental human nature.

The case for the Queen is at least clearly understandable. It is true her Regent was eighteen years her senior. In spite of his toil and the repeated blows of Fate, he was still in appearance one of the most striking-looking men in Europe. From childhood he seems to have figured in her precocious little brain as a kind of demi-god—some one who was stronger than even her own autocratic self. Her fits of childish hate and affection were determined by his attitude to her of "Master" or "friend." She at least never despised him. He was never less to her than a hero.

Given her life and her surroundings, it is not surprising that Queen Tessa, at the age of eighteen, began to fall in love with the one being whom she recognized as her superior in her narrow world.

The case for the Prince is a different matter. He had already passed through the experience of a very great and exalted passion. He had never hampered his life with any meaner emotion, and his knowledge of women and their mental processes was elementary in the extreme.

Still it was the Queen who fed the hidden hunger of his soul. She was never a beautiful woman, barely good-looking if one strictly analyzes her face, but she possessed in an amazing degree that quality of imagination which is more powerful than beauty itself. She was no weak character, and, though there was nothing masculine in her manner, her courage at this period was superb, both physically and mentally. She feared no one unless it were the Prince and she presented a serene indifference and scorn to the petty intrigues of the Court. She had indeed all the qualities of a great woman, and if the Prince could have bent his pride to face the possibilities, Queen Tessa might well have proved one of the most notable rulers of her country. But such an attitude was not possible. Even if outward circumstances had justified it, the tragedy of the

past was for him an impassable barrier. Raphael's dead hand barred the way so effectually that, as we shall see, his whole lifework must crumble and dissolve, and the Queen herself be wreaked and broken before he could rise to the recognition of the supreme rights of a great love for fulfilment.

IV

The Queen's diary:

"April.

It is a long time since my visit to Arenzano. I have seen very little of the Prince since. He seldom comes to talk about anything but business. I get so sick of it, and having to receive Ambassadors' wives when I detest them! They still insist on talking of my marriage; the very thought of which sickens me. Why should I marry? I am quite content. If it were necessary my First Minister would mention it . . . . . I wrote those words an hour ago. Would he? . . . . . Or wouldn't he? . . . . . .

"Oh Paul, Paul! You must know there is only one mate for me in all the world. You knew it when you carried me home at Arenzano; you knew it on the night of my Ball nearly four years ago! And you want me, I know that! I lie and think of those wide apart moments when we have really lived—you and I! If I could put my crown at your feet for you to walk on I would, so that you could see only the woman and forget the crown. But I will! I never thought before of the *crown* standing between us! To me it has always been you who are my master—the real ruler—the real King! But I see now . . . Paul is too proud to forget the outside appearance. It's I who must sweep it away.

"They want me to marry. To marry 'for the safety and solidifying of the country and the ensuring of the Throne!'

Well I will marry the one man that can pilot the country to safety and honor, who is loved and adored by the people, who *is* the real ruler now in Romanzia! I will give him the crown that's his already! . . . And if he were hated by every living soul, if he were tearing my country to shreds and shattering my throne, I would still marry him just the same—my Regent, Prince—Paul!

* * * * * *

"To-morrow he will come and see me as usual between five and six—that's our hour. He has not missed it for weeks. I ought to have a fight with my pride, I suppose! But I have no pride. My pride is *his,* is in him! He will make it strong. It will be like being born again. All those beautiful things that are real to him, he will make real to me! Oh, I know it is in me to learn—of him; to become a little more fit for the great thing I am going to grasp. I could be 'good'—could be whatever he wants me to be—I will be! Those lovely moments which have come to me sometimes when he's talked to me of life and work and the glory of it all (and only then) will become not strange, but part of me . . . Paul, my need of you is so great you must take me and drown me in your generous heart that deserves something so much better than I am, that it must be what I can be since I *am* yours already! . . . When I write again in this book, if I ever do, it will be from the threshold of Heaven!"

But there were no more entries in the Queen's Diary.

CHAPTER XXIII

A WOMAN ACTS

I

IT was a dull November evening. The air which for days had been heavy and stagnant seemed to be quickening into life. In the Royal garden the leaves that still clung to the trees shivered a little in premonition of coming destruction. There had been incessant rain for a week, the ground was sodden and all one touched seemed to exude moisture.

The Queen stood in the window of her boudoir and looked out into the garden. Her pale face and dark hair, and the absence of color in her soft grey gown, brought her into painful harmony with the November day. She was quite alone—even her ladies-in-waiting never entered the little room without special permission. It was all white and grey, splashed here and there with strangely vivid colorings, grouped spasmodically with no appreciation of values. There was a piano of the latest pattern in the room, a pile of music scattered on a settee.

She was thinking of the last entry made in her diary the previous evening. Her purpose was the same as when she wrote it, but she was aware now that she needed all her

courage to carry through her intention. She drove her thoughts between straight walls and looked neither to right nor left. The grey evening was the prelude to days and nights of unimaginable glory for which she had hungered all her dreary life or the closing in of interminable autumn. She drew down her brows at that thought and turned from the window to look at the clock. These moments of waiting were always the longest in the whole day.

It was in this room that she always received the Prince for a formal half-hour when, before leaving the Palace, he visited her to inform her of matters in which she was supposed to be interested and for which she cared not the snap of a finger. Occasionally she would pretend an enthusiasm for government and thus detain him beyond the allotted time. She felt he divined her fraud but he never charged her with it.

She stood there waiting with her eyes on the clock.

At last the looked-for request!

Would Her Majesty receive His Highness Prince d'Arenzano? Her Majesty would.

She felt instinctively that he was in little mood to listen to friendly advances but her courage not only rose to the occasion, it stepped beyond. The victory would be the greater and surer.

She listened to his report quietly, remarked on it, and then stood up. The Prince rose.

"I am not dismissing you," she said steadily. "You have made your report. I in my turn have something to report—and say."

He looked at her a little suspiciously, a little surprised.

"Shall I ring for lights?" he demanded.

She said "No," that she preferred the dusk. So they stood waiting for each other. In the silence she could almost hear her heart beating.

"Paul," she said suddenly—she called him so at times to his face,—"I have something to say to you which concerns us both. Through these long years you have given me such services as no Queen ever had given her before, and the Queen is grateful—but to-night the Queen does not exist. I am myself a woman—and you yourself a man—and because the shadow of the Queen may be between me—and great happiness, the woman is going to step on it. Paul, will you marry me?"

Dead silence. The heart-beats now were so audible that they deadened the ticking of the little clock whose golden Cupids chased the hours on a jewelled dial. Dead silence—the flames flickered and laughed and crumbled their generators to ashes. She wanted to stop his answering now—not to unsay her words but to prolong the silence, to seek him and find him in his innermost being—for she knew that he who was going to speak was but the exterior and that he was locking the door of his "being" behind him.

At last he spoke.

"May I ask Your Majesty what reason I have ever given to warrant such a possibility?"

The cold brutality of it struck her like a lash.

It was an indefensible blow—unforgivable! It shattered her as a woman and a Queen. It destroyed at once all her defences, leaving but the poor one of bitter anger behind which to shelter her wounded soul—anger at his falseness—for she knew it was false by the very deliberateness of the implied lie. She needed no argument or explanation. Her instinct leaped to comprehension. He would have none of her, not because he did not love her but because *Europe* would cry out at him, because a hundred falsenesses in the past stood between them, and all his courage fell short of hers when the shock of real encounter came.

He was speaking rapidly, coldly, decisively. She found

herself listening with dull scorn, watching him with unfaltering eyes. She knew her color had not changed nor had she physically flinched. What was he saying?

"I thank you very greatly for the honor you have done me but on consideration surely even your youth would see the impossibility of such a marriage—I have ever tried to regard myself as your faithful guardian and friend.—You have shared, and do share, my heart with Max."

There was a lie before which even he faltered. His voice stopped. She felt him gasp. No, he had not, he did not range her beside Max. He loved her, and repudiated her.

Blind anger, passionate resentment of his pride surged up in her. She too could lie if he could. She held up her head.

"There is no need to continue, Prince. I understand exactly. No doubt my incomplete grasp of politics and political necessities misled me. But I do not ask you to forget, but to remember. That is all—to-night."

She dismissed him. Outwardly, though she had failed, the victory was hers, for he went: and at the door paused and looked at her standing there in the firelight watching him with unfaltering eyes, a brave figure of a woman.

If she had called to him again in the silence, he might have turned, but he had struck her soul unconscious in those fierce cruel words, which were his first mad defence against an enemy too dear for half measures.

He opened the door and went out.

The Queen stood still gazing at nothing. She must not lower her flag. She must crouch for protection behind her courage or die. Would it shelter her?

Apparently it would. She rang the bell for lights and summoned a lady.

"We will play cards this evening," she said, with a fierce weariness. "I think I am in the mood to win."

II

The Prince had no rampart behind which to shelter. He tried anger and it failed him. He tried indignation and it crumpled at his touch. He tried a tolerant scorn of women and the very echo mocked him. He clutched at his pride but it was no rampart of defence; it was a broken sword in his hand.

For he loved her with all the force of his long-controlled, pent-up nature. He wanted her more than salvation itself and the thing was impossible.

What would it look like in the eyes of any decent man, let alone the Chancelleries of Europe? Men would say he had used his unique position to gain the Crown of Romanzia for himself. He was not deluded. He knew even then, that Romanzia would welcome the alliance, that populations cared little for codes of conduct. It was after all to himself, to his own code, he stood or fell. He had only to ask his own verdict on another man who in his place succumbed. Could any love make up for a mortal blow at his own honor?

He clung to these sufficient facts. He told himself there was no need to look into the black past, to take count of the injury dealt to the Royal House by his own brother.

The thing was impossible.

On one point he will still adamant. He would not look on her side of the question. He admitted she was young; it was natural her thoughts should turn to love and marriage. He was to blame for leaving the matter so long unsettled.

He recognized that he had avoided the question and the duty. He *would* not see why he had avoided it.

Perhaps he succeeded in persuading himself that she was but a girl and must fall in love with some one, and had no

better object in view than himself. As before stated, he was very ignorant on the subject of woman.

But he was quite well informed on the subject—man, that for a man to fall short of his own code of honor, is to damn his soul irretrievably. If he were fighting Love he at least believed he was fighting for his soul's salvation. He loathed himself for that first blow. It had been an instinctive effort to snatch at safety, for there was a traitor within him that called for surrender, called out that a soul might be well lost, that there was something higher than the code of man's making. The blow had been levelled at that —and had struck her.

He sought consolation,—again his ignorance advised him,—in her calm acceptance of his refusal, her coldness and self-control. She was not too deeply taken in Love's toils after all, not like himself netted and trapped in passion, torn in twain by a struggle bitter as life itself.

So through the night he wrestled with himself, fought against his destiny and instinct, and won.

III

Three days later the question of the Queen's marriage was again moved in the Council. It was not the first time the subject had cropped up; on this occasion the Regent seemed more disposed to give it serious attention than before. Possible candidates were canvassed. Matters were put in train. Before the New Year had taken life, there were three applicants for the hand of Queen Tessa of Romanzia:—Prince Alexis of Seria, a serious-minded youth of unblemished character, and whose possible claim to the throne of Seria was too remote to be seriously considered. The Grand Duke Frederick, able, ambitious, and restless, under whose hands Romanzia was likely to link her fortunes to the Central Kingdoms for good and

evil; he was a widower and forty-five years of age. Prince Karl of Hanberg, the nephew of the reigning House, possessed of good looks, a charming manner, no ambitions, and the most easy of morals. This candidate was the most frankly desirous of the match, and he had influence behind him.

All the men were known personally to the Regent. The first two were men he could trust, and for whom he entertained a certain respect. The last he considered thoroughly unsuitable, and it was only after a stormy debate that the Council for once over-rode its President's objections, and insisted on the name of Prince Karl appearing on the list which he was to present to the Queen.

For the horrible mockery of it all was that it was his place to present such a list, his to advise and commend the choice, to arrange meetings, to carry through the betrothal, and safeguard the marriage.

It is not greatly to be wondered at that Carlos Dermier records of these days: "Some return of the old difficult times. The Prince was unapproachable, subject to bursts of passion, and ready to work any one of us to a standstill."

On January 4th, the Prince asked for an interview with Her Majesty which was formally granted. The Queen received him in a State Apartment surrounded by her ladies. Madame Madelaine Loiseni wrote a careful account of it all to her cousin, the wife of the Romanzian Ambassador in Paris:

"Her Majesty desired us to attend her at an official interview with the Chief Minister, informing us beforehand that she understood it concerned the selection of a husband for herself. 'It is the advantage of a Queen that all responsibility in the difficult task is taken off her shoulders,' she told us in the mocking manner that of late has been so

noticeable. I believe as a point of fact she bitterly resents the question of her marriage being raised at all—or if raised, not being left to make her own selection.

"However, at three in the afternoon we all, in our best silks and satins and ribbons, assembled in the Great Salon, in the middle of which was a table with a chair one side for Her Majesty, and a chair on the other for the Prince.

"He was punctual to the minute, but it seemed to me he hesitated on the threshold as if surprised to see so many present. Her Majesty smiled and said:

" 'Surely you are not alarmed at my poor ladies, Prince? A matter already fully debated in my Council can contain no secret my personal friends may not share.'

"He bowed and kissed her hand, but I vow to you her words seemed to hit him sorely. He said something in a low voice, whereupon she answered with a laugh:

" 'Truly I had forgotten that the gentlemen aspiring to the honor of my hand may have feelings of their own. Show me your written list, Prince, and we will allude to them by number, thus their delicacy cannot be offended.'

"For a moment I fancied we were about to be treated to such a storm as rumor whispers of. He drew himself up to his great height.—Ah, Amélie, how splendid a man he is!—and looked the Queen straight in the face, but she met his gaze quite unmoved, and the utterly mocking smile she wore all the time never died away. It might have been painted on her face. In the end she signalled to us to retire a little.

"The Prince laid a paper before her and spoke in a cold matter-of-fact voice. The touch of interior interest seemed wiped out and as to romance! *ma foi,* Amélie, there was not so much as would cover a coin! This was his speech as well as I can remember it:

" 'Your Majesty's Council, having Your Majesty's and Your Majesty's country's best interest at heart, greatly

desire that Your Majesty will consider the desirability of safeguarding the Realm and the Dynasty by a suitable and honorable marriage. And since Your Majesty's Council in no way desire to unduly force an unacceptable alliance on Your Majesty, they venture to present for Your Majesty's consideration the accompanying list of possible candidates, and would endeavor to meet Your Majesty's wishes with regard to preparatory meetings in such a way as to leave Your Majesty full liberty to withdraw before negotiations are even opened.

" 'Your Majesty's Council desire to present their humble services and will ever pray that Your Majesty may make wise and fit choice for the ensuring of Your Majesty's future happiness, and the prosperity and well-being of the Realm.'

"Having read this marvellous document in a voice that was utterly devoid of feeling, the Prince laid it and another paper on the table before the Queen, who signed to him to seat himself, and said lightly:

" 'Well, let us see this wonderful list of circumspect gentlemen. Three?' She appeared to read them over—and then shook her head.

" 'They are strangers to me, Prince; introduce them, please. Let us call them, One Two, Three, to save their modesty.'

"I noticed she continued to speak quite clearly and without lowering her voice, as if she would repudiate any aspect of the matter but the public one. Our distance was not so great that we could not hear her and see, and I admit our attention did not wander!

"The Prince, on the other hand, spoke in a low, restrained voice. I had the idea he longed to box her ears—I know I should in his place. One could not follow his words but I

gathered that he favored the candidates in order of arrangement—at least, the Queen said presently:

" 'Plainly you are backing Number One, sir. Run over his charms again, please.'

"His lips straightened ominously, but apparently he obeyed. Quite suddenly she interrupted him, and stood up.

" 'I thank you; if I ever meet your special choice, I will convey to him your eloquent championship. But alas! my fancy is otherwise engaged. Please convey to my Council, Prince, my thanks for their paternal kindness and consideration. I shall be pleased to accept Candidate Three as my husband and Prince Consort. There is no need to trouble about preliminary meetings, if the Prince himself is sufficiently assured that I am to his taste. I am sure on my part that I can look for nothing better and I leave it to you to make all other arrangements.'

"But the Prince broke out on this—fiercely and with great passion.

" 'Madame, I beseech you, is this the spirit in which to meet so great a matter?'

"She turned on him with a flash of answering anger, and it crossed my mind—but breathe this to no one, Amélie, for Heaven's sake—that something unseen lay beneath all this play-acting, something which did not meet the eye.

"The Queen flashed out:

" 'The spirit, sir, in which I choose to meet the affair is not the concern of my Council, or you. I repeat I select Prince Karl of Hanberg. Kindly convey my desire to my Council who so generously allowed me a choice in the matter.'

"My dear Amélie, I vow I felt as I do when I am waiting, with my head in a pillow, for a thunderstorm to break! You could feel everyone holding their breath, and nothing happened at all. The Prince bowed and left the room. The

Queen, after standing a moment looking at the papers on the table, suddenly caught them up and tore them in half; and then turned to us and cried:

" 'Come and discuss the really important matter of my trousseau. We can leave the frivolous marriage preliminaries to the men, but the really important matter belongs to us women.'

"I declared to you, Amélie, I wanted to weep though I do not know why. I have always considered Her Majesty a little hard and unnatural, but I had not expected her to be so utterly devoid of sentiment as this. I think that Prince Karl, who is reported as a charming man, will not find his path strewn completely with roses."

IV

Prince d'Arenzano did make one more effort to save the Queen from the reckless course on which she had embarked, at least so it is surmised. Dermier mentions the fact that His Excellency sought an interview with her on January 14th, and that he returned from it within the hour very moody and despondent. Another lady's correspondence informs us that on the evening of January 14th, Her Majesty was in a particularly reckless mood, playing heavily and losing large sums, and that she talked incessantly and with disconcerting candor of her coming marriage, and the pleasant change it would make in existence. "She speaks of the Prince Karl as if he were an expected guest who might turn out amusing," writes the lady in question, "openly naming him, though I understand officially there is nothing yet arranged."

It is probable that the Queen took this method of forcing the hands of her Council or, rather, of the President of the Council.

The Prince was most bitterly hurt and alarmed at the

sudden turn of affairs. He seems to have considered the Queen's behavior entirely indefensible and to have made no allowance for her injured pride as a Queen, or her desperate plight as a woman in love: but however he failed to understand her, he at least fully appreciated the unsuitability of Prince Karl for her husband. Weak, unstable, gay and irresponsible—was that a man to whom he could, with any confidence, entrust the difficult wayward girl, for whom he was still responsible? From the point of view of the country it was fraught with danger; from the personal point of view it was desperate.

Meanwhile his relations with the Queen were difficult in the extreme. She did not shun him, she rather singled him out in public for enquiries, for advice, for instructions, as if actuated by the laudable intention of at last realizing her responsible duties, which she had hitherto been so content to relegate to the President of the Council, who was supposed to represent her on the Council of State.

But in private she saw him not at all, despite the efforts he made to secure an audience or two. The few that marked the change in their relationship, and those who did put it down to mere annoyance that the Chief Minister had pressed her into matrimony before she herself was so inclined.

CHAPTER XXIV

A FATAL MARRIAGE

ALMOST before the country had assimilated the idea of a Royal Betrothal the marriage itself was at the door. The arrangements for the same, either by accident or design, seem to have passed from the hands of the Chief Minister into those of the Duke of Avala.

Just one week before the marriage Her Majesty signified her intention of attending a Council of State. It was the last Council to meet under the old order of things and, in any case, was likely to be a momentous one, but the unprecedented presence of the Queen at once raised and altered the entire outlook, and not a Minister was absent on the eventful day.

Her Majesty, we learn, entered the Council Chamber at a quarter past eleven. She appeared pale, but carried herself with dignity and was graciousness itself in her greeting to her Ministers. She took the Presidential Chair and the Prince sat on her right hand and the Duke of Avala on her left. There was, one gathers, a general air of restraint and nervousness, but the preliminary and ostensible business of the Meeting was carried through successfully, Her Majesty showing a far greater appreciation of political affairs than

the majority of Her Council anticipated. She expressed her entire satisfaction as to the delegation of power to her future husband, and also as to the liberal income allotted to him.

The business of the day concluded, Her Majesty expressed her thanks to the Council for its services. We are told her voice was very soft and charming, though the same recorder appears to have been lulled to no sense of security thereby.

"Our marriage and Prince Karl's subsequent position as President of this Council must occasion a general readjustment of affairs. It is not Our place to dictate to you in these matters but it is at once Our privilege and sad duty to thank those who, having borne the burden of the day, will now be desirous to relinquish their heavy task to turn, We can only hope, to more congenial and personal duties. It is difficult to conceive Romanzia under any guidance but that of the Prince d'Arenzano, but to such a conception are We forced to come, for We must with extreme reluctance acknowledge the impossibility of Our offering or of his accepting any subordinate position in the Government of the country he has ruled so wisely and so long. Could honors and dignities be added to his already honored name, it would be Our greatest happiness to bestow them as poor tokens of great gratitude. Alas, even this inadequate return is denied Us for there remains no honor, Order, or distinction for Us to offer, or him to accept. We confess Ourselves bankrupt before the inestimable services he has rendered Us and lament Our poverty; still We entreat him to claim from Us any privilege, advantage or consideration which it is in the power of Romanzia to bestow, which would serve to convince him of the undying good will and the eternal esteem in which We hold him."

There may have been as many as three of the Council

prepared for this *tour de force,* but on the remainder it fell like a stupefying thunder-clap. Even his enemies had never reckoned on Prince d'Arenzano's summary dismissal, while to his friends it was a terrifying and disastrous impossibility.

They sat staring at each other in the dead silence that followed the Queen's speech, hardly at pains to disguise their consternation and hardly daring to look at their leader. The question that lay at every man's heart was, "How far was the Prince prepared for such an announcement?" Why, if it had been his intention to desert Romanzia, had he not hinted as much to his supporters? No man there could bring himself to believe that this thing was a far more overwhelming surprise to Prince d'Arenzano than to themselves. The worst they could imagine was a secret cabal of which Her Majesty was made the innocent mouthpiece. That a woman's mind alone, actuated by pride and love stricken to the dust, could have voiced and planned so cruel a blow would have been incredible, even had the actual sequence of events been known to them.

Prince d'Arenzano made small effort to improve the situation. When the Queen finished speaking he duly proposed a vote of thanks to Her Majesty for her attendance and for her clear statement of her wishes, which he was sure would meet with approval from all concerned. He gave no clue as to his own mind and intention, and during the next week occupied himself entirely in drawing up a concise and masterly review of the condition and standing of Romanzia at home and abroad; outlining the future policy he would advocate, and laying special emphasis on the need of maintaining the new prosperity of the people by careful taxation, and rigid economy in social display.

The wedding took place on February 27th, in the Cathedral of St. Vincent, and was a gorgeous ceremonial, of

which we read that the display of dresses and jewels surpassed any previous pageant of the kingdom.

Dermier writes—almost the only personal note we have of this significant time:

"His Highness has all the appearance of a man exercising control by paralyzing certain faculties—one lives in terror as to what might happen should that control fail. He has dismissed us all. I am, forsooth, to be handed over to Count Max who, in spite of his youth, is to be Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs. The Prince said to me in his new dry, harsh manner: 'You will be able to enlighten him on the morality of diplomatic relationship. He is still a little *en l'air* on these questions.' One is at a loss to imagine how the Count can accept, or the Prince permit him to accept any office under a Government that has treated the Head of his House and the savior of Romanzia with such ingratitude!

"I hear rumors of deep discontent amongst the people at the whole proceedings."

Whether it originated with the Queen, with the Prince himself, or Avala as mouth-piece of the Guild of St. Augustine, there is small doubt that the retention of Count Max was a sop to this discontent, which was far more audible outside official circles than inside.

The people were left in ignorance as to whether the desertion of their Idol was the result of intrigue or personal design. The Prince himself never opened his mouth in criticism, defence or explanation. He merely retired. The Orensē Palace was partially closed with the exception of one wing where, for the time, Count Max was to reside. The Prince returned to the haunted loneliness of Arenzano, and no one but his personal servants followed him back to the exile of his own home.

II

The Prince's restless spirit found no peace at Arenzano. The memories enshrined there were too poignant for endurance. Cellino is discreetly silent save on purely official matters.

Count Max maintained a regular though rather one-sided correspondence with his brother, in which one can read an epitome of political events, related with a clarity and open-mindedness that is amazing when one considers the writer's years. He made no attempts to disguise the growing gravity of the situation, but reported no gossip, founded or unfounded.

The facts alone were enough to goad the exiled man to madness. Pride and sheer misery drove him from his home to wander about Europe. One hears of him here and there, —in Vienna, St. Petersburg, Rome, Paris,—a grim figure flitting across the stage of other men's dramas, absorbed only in the mounting tragedy of his own, fiercely seeking distraction where none was; unapproachable with unappeasable hunger in his heart for all that a woman's cold cruel hands had taken from him.

III

In Romanzia—or one should say with more truth, in Cardozza—events moved swiftly.

The marriage ceremony once celebrated, the Court proceeded to embark on a new existence. Gaiety was the prevailing note; amusement the serious business of life. The Duke of Avala became the Supreme Head of the Government, for the Prince Consort's position on the Council was but an empty form. Avala represented the Reactionary Party. As such he must needs be in direct opposition to the purpose of the Guild of St. Augustine, and it is one of the

complicated tangles of the time to understand how—being what he was—he also was the tool of Rivoli. The solution of the puzzle lies in the personality and aims of Rivoli himself and is outside the scope of this book. All we can do is to point out that the Government passed into the hands of the Reactionary Force, whose chief concern was to furnish money for the outrageous extravagances of the Court which, in less than six months, doubled the expenditure of any of the past three years.

Events within the Court itself were equally pregnant and misleading. The passion for idle gossip soon expanded into malicious scandals. It is difficult to trace even a thread of truth amid all the lies and inventions that abound. What stands out most prominently is that from the first the Queen and her young husband never pretended to anything more than a polite tolerance of each other.

Prince Karl's position, under the happiest auspices, would not have been an easy one had he been a conscientious man with any idea of duty towards his adopted country.

He chose to eradicate such difficulties by declining all responsibilities save that of avoiding *ennuie*. And no one worked harder for a desired end. In all matters of amusement, public or private, he co-operated with the Queen in complete accord.

Gossip failed to report of any dispute or bad feeling between them; but it is certain that Her Majesty made it clear to her Royal partner from the very outset that she would offer no impediment to whatever line of life he might be pleased to take, so long as he left her a corresponding freedom.

The Prince appears to have had the virtue of discretion inasmuch as his way of life provoked more amusement than scandal. He was a liberal lover, but he contrived to offend

no one. He was popular even with the people. It was the Queen herself who appeared to find virtue neither in discretion, tact, nor moderation. Correspondents of the time speak of her as a striking example of hereditary tendencies. Her audacities outdid the earlier records of her notorious mother. No idea was too *bizarre* to afford amusement, no whim too extravagant for gratification, and no man too conceited to be taken in favor. Indeed, when one reads the various names of those supposed to gain her favor for a short period and then vanished into nothingness, one is struck by a certain likeness in fatuous self-conceit, in lack of any stamina even for evil; mere inanimate props to sustain a false idea. That is the conclusion to which one is reduced, and the wonder remains that the Court and the public could be so flagrantly hoodwinked, or that her victims should have held their tongues concerning their absurd position.

The Queen was no fool. She intended to create a certain impression and she chose her tools well, with skilful regard for her own convenience. How far Prince Karl was aware of her purpose or the truth, one cannot know. There are a few letters of his extant in which he mentions his wife with something of respect and even pity.

"Her Majesty is a far more able woman than her Ministers imagine. I confess to admiration of her powers of carrying out her own designs without asking for aid or sympathy from any."

Later on he writes:

"The Queen told the Duke (Avala) that if the Exchequer could not meet her demands on it, he must instantly levy some new tax. Between ourselves this would hardly seem wisdom, but it is not my business to decide what Romanzia can or cannot support in the way of taxation. The fête has to be a success, that is my concern. In truth there is so little

asked of me that I should be loath to fail Her Majesty in this matter, therefore send me, I pray you . . ."

A not unlikeable young man, one gathers, though possessing neither stamina nor moral courage, and—for all we know—a possible tragedy of his own hidden beneath his gay careless exterior.

Whatever may have been the popular delusion on one subject there was no delusion at all over the Queen's fantastic extravagance, nor alas! in her fierce demands to her Ministers to provide her with means to gratify her wild whims. If the Prince Consort was her left hand helper, the Duke of Avala, First Minister of the Crown, was her right hand supporter. He was as prodigal as the Queen, and in two years' time the burden of taxation was doubled, and the people groaned and cursed beneath a burden the newly enfranchised country could not bear with security.

A few men of the late Government clung on in the hope they might stem the tide of destruction. It is curious to see how unanimously they turned to the one representative of the d'Arenzanos, Count Max. A letter of his—of an unusually expansive order—to his exiled brother shows very clearly to what straits the Patriotic Party were reduced.

Count Max at the time was a little over tweny-three and Under Secretary for Foreign Affairs.

"Dear Paul,

"You speak of going to Rome so I am doubtful whether this will reach you before you leave. I could wish you were returning to Arenzano for a short time as there are many subjects on which I need your advice.

"There is talk of increasing the Army. It is difficult to conceive where they would find the necessary money. At present pay is sadly in arrears, I hear. One hopes the idea

will come to nothing. The Council is divided: Avala for it naturally, but Parva and Messurt are opposed and have a good following.

"I should be glad if you can give me a résumé of the arguments which led to our rejection of the terms offered us by the Turkish Government for the right of occupying the Island of Palmos. They were doubtless quite sound but seem in danger of being forgotten. A renewed attempt is being made, and I have a suspicion the original terms are translated in 'Hard cash' and hard cash is a commodity much desired by this Government.

"I should not trouble you in the matter after your only too true remarks anent the absurdity of seeking advice from you now, but di Florence, Parva and Monduré all called on me yesterday informally; and Monduré, with tears in his eyes, entreated me to look up memoranda, or to *remember* the terms in which you put before the Council your reasons for rejecting any *rapproachement* with Turkey. Since my remembrance of political matters ten years ago is not very vivid, I would take it as a personal favor if you will save my pride in having to remind these good people of my immature years.

"I dined at the Palace last night. His Royal Highness was witty and amusing as ever. I do not consider the Queen looking well.

"Did I tell you there is a project in the air of Her Majesty replacing H. R. H. in the Council? The latter so emphatically refuses to mix himself up in politics that either Avala or the Queen must become President of the Council. I'm inclined to think Her Majesty will win the day and Parva has just been in to ask me to use all my power to oppose the Queen's assumption of public authority, on the ground that if matters get too bad Avala could be crushed, but that if Her Majesty is directly responsible it means revolution.

"You profess non-interest in our domestic politics but I have nothing else to write about.

"Believe me,

"Your faithful and devoted brother,

"Max d'Arenzano."

Apparently Count Max's influence, strained to breaking-point, was able to achieve postponement of the suggested change in the Council for a time. But only for a time. The same situation cropped up again the following year and this time he failed; the breaking-point was reached and his retirement precipitated the catastrophe the Marquess de Parva had foreseen. Before that, however, a domestic affair had changed not only Count Max's life, but his momentary relationship with his absent brother.

CHAPTER XXV

A CRISIS

"DEAR Paul: You have often said you wished I would marry. I am now prepared to oblige you and sincerely hope you will hasten to send me your congratulations and blessing, which are all that are needed to complete my happiness.

"Philippa Flaneau is the daughter of the late Virgilio Flaneau, a gentleman who lived on his own small property some five miles from Cardozza. Philippa has inherited every virtue from her family and added to them every charm the most exacting man could wish for. I hope to give you the rather romantic details of my courtship when we meet.

"You are the first to hear my news. I naturally desire to carry with me to her mother your assurance of my respectability and steady character! So take pity on my impatience and send me your blessing by the best courier available! I am,

"your devoted brother,
"Max."

It must have been a shock to the Count to receive the following answer:

"Dear Max,

"Since I have never heard the names of the people you mention, the matter is hardly one on which I can offer congratulations as your brother, much less my approval as the Head of your Family. You have been somewhat precipitate in engaging yourself, since being my heir your marriage is a matter of some concern to me, and I take it as needful and right that you should make such an alliance as will increase the sorely tried honor of our House. Money I do not look for, but position and name I have the right to demand. It could certainly promote neither the lady's nor your happiness to contract an unrecognized marriage. Romance will have its way, no doubt, in youth; you can both console yourselves with such thoughts. But before you again venture into the field of matrimony, kindly let me know the name of the object of your desire so that you and she may be spared unnecessary disappointment. Since you say the matter has not gone farther than our three selves, there is not much mischief done. I am ready to shoulder any blame you like to throw on me. If it is possible for you to take a holiday, you might join me in Rome for a short time.

"I am,

"Your affectionate brother,

"Paul d'Arenzano."

What Count Max thought of the letter can be judged by his answer and action.

"Dear Paul,

"Your letter causes me great distress and grievous disappointment. I entertained the hope that you had sufficient confidence in my sense of obligation to the family and myself to be assured I should present no one to you

unworthy of our name and traditions. I own I might have announced my intention to you before speaking to the lady, but that could hardly have influenced my action and would, I fear, but have emphasized my unfortunate opposition to your wishes. I consider not only my affections but my honor engaged. Therefore, greatly as I deplore any misunderstanding with you who have been father, mother and brother to me, I must definitely say that I cannot renounce my love at command or for reasons which are, to my thinking, inadequate. The honor of Arenzano requires no bolstering or support by any means other than that of integrity of person and high and honorable ideals, and such my chosen wife brings with her in abundance. I am hoping that longer acquaintance with the idea will have in some degree reconciled you to it, or at least to a fresh consideration of it, and I beg of you to accord me that kindly judgment and brotherly assistance which I have always received at your hands.

"Your devoted brother,
"Max."

Alas, the letter appears to have reached the Prince simultaneously with a report concerning the Queen which added fuel to the fire of bitterness that burned within him, and which unhappily warped for the time both his judgment and his affections. He would hear nothing of this unknown girl. He chose to think the fortunes of his House demanded "heroic re-establishment;" and as a man ruined financially may strive to market his children's affections, so Prince d'Arenzano strove to force his youngest brother to some sufficiently brilliant worldly alliance which would serve to strengthen the broken power of the National Party.

Count Max, however, would listen to no such bargaining. He developed suddenly all the traditional romantic deter-

mination of the d'Arenzanos in the pursuit of their love affairs; with or without his brother's assent he was going to make Philippa Flarneau his wife, though a quarrel with his brother cut him to the heart. He indeed refused to quarrel. He wrote one more dignified but affectionate letter to the Prince, stating the fact that he was going to be married on a certain date, but since the Prince could not see his way to withdraw his objection to the marriage, he would, of course, withdraw himself from the Orensē Palace, and should not expect his brother to continue his allowance. He had a small income of his own and his official salary, very inadequate means by measure of the scale to which he was accustomed, but representing in Philippa Flarneau's eyes, quite an ample fortune.

They were married very quietly at the Church of St. Thomas, and took up their abode in what Count Max considered very modest quarters. The Orensē Palace was again closed and left in the hands of a few servants, and Count Max, save in his official capacity, dropped out of the social world into a domestic existence which seems to have been altogether satisfactory.

The Court, one gathers, chose to disapprove of the marriage, and the Queen betrayed unexpected lack of humor in roundly taking the Count to task for flying in the face of his brother's counsels. "Madame," he is reported to have said, "I have not quarrelled with my brother but only with his absence from Cardozza, which makes a misunderstanding possible." The Count still remained in office, however, though his difficulties increased each month. The National Party grew heart-sick and many of the leaders of it retired to their country houses, weary with the hopeless struggle. Matters were fast sliding from bad to worse.

In the summer of 1845 the rage of the people was chiefly directed against a certain Mathias Carodi, a poet of quite a

doubtful reputation who somhow had contrived to gain the ear of the Queen, and whose extravagant fancies in the way of masques, fêtes, and theatrical displays emptied the Royal Exchequer with scandalous rapidity. The man inhabited a princely set of apartments in Cardozza; he was a born fool; the worst of his rhymes were insipid and the best of them indecent, yet he was perpetually at the Court, seen continually with the Queen, who appeared to shower favors on him.

It was at this juncture of affairs that Carfax again appears on the scene, affording us the only glimpse we have of Count Max's early domestic life.

Diary of Henry Carfax

"June 24th, 1845; 16 Doros Street, Cardozza.

"It is seven years since I was here, and the changes are too complete for me to feel at home. I was loath to quarter myself on Max under the circumstances but it was evident he would be hurt if I refused, so I am here in his very charming house, tended by his far more charming wife, who seems to me to have been born and reared especially to join her lot with Max.

"I hoped to hear more particulars of the Prince's amazing retirement after the Royal marriage, but he has nothing to say on the matter, except that his brother could not see his way to continue in office under the circumstances. There is something behind it undoubtedly but Count Max is not the man to divulge State secrets. I had heard no particulars of this pre-eminently happy marriage and was not a little amazed, when, speaking to my hostess of her great brother-in-law, she said quietly she had never met him.

"Later on Max told me that Paul had not attended the wedding, which was quite quiet. 'He does not care to come

to Cardozza,' he said slowly, 'and he does not altogether approve of my marriage. He has not yet seen Philippa, you see.'

"Max looks thin and careworn for his age, but has the same courteous manners and vivid interest in outside things which were his as a boy. Before his wife, at least, he never utters a word of the scandals of the Court, and speaks of the Queen with a respect no one else appears to accord her, either here or in Europe generally.

"June 27th.

"I asked Max to-day straight out what he thought of the rumors and talk that abound. 'One would like to be in a position to refute them if false,' I told him. He deliberated a while and then said slowly: 'If you ask if these things are *said* here as in other countries, well, they are. If you ask if they are true, I say frankly the extravagances of the Court are inconceivable, and the Government lapsing back into rottenness; but if you ask further, then bear in mind that Paul had control of Her Majesty from the age of twelve until she was twenty, that he considered her a fine character, that she showed no signs of folly or poor judgment while he had rule. Her few indiscretions were those of a generous, too confiding nature. Resolve the riddle if you can. For my part, she is the Queen and the woman Paul served for eight strenuous years, and I serve her too. I can't give you my reasons for disbelieving rumor—but I do say Rumor lies!'

" 'That is enough for me,' I returned quickly and he said, 'I wish it were enough for others.'

"June 28th.

"I've learned more to-day of Count Max's position. What a loyal soul it is! I met Orsena. He was in Cardozza to see his son, Camillo, just made Captain in the Royal Guard; otherwise he said he avoided the palace. Incidentally I

remarked on my surprise that Count Max did not return to Arenzano himself, whereupon Orsena opened his eyes. 'Why, he won't even set foot in the Orensē Palace here till His Highness acknowledges his marriage. Surely you know, you are staying there!' I told him I had merely gathered that the Prince was not favorable to the marriage, and he gave a short little laugh. 'They do not even correspond now, I believe, and our Count will not take a penny from him. I'm Regent down there, and my orders are that Count Max is to have whatever he asks for. You can guess how much that is since the Prince simply ignores his wife.' 'Why?' He shrugged his shoulders. 'Who can tell, it's the old bad days over again. He wanders over Europe. I had to meet him in Rome once—no pleasure, alas!'

"'Why did he resign?' I demanded impatiently, and Orsena gave me an odd look. 'A good many people would like to know that,' he said dryly. 'I always imagine that Max knows but he never says.' I told him what he had said to me concerning the worst rumors. 'Yes, it's hard to believe, but even harder to disbelieve. Things will be worse before they are better, I think. The country is heading for revolution. God grant *he* comes back in time!'

"He had to go one way and I another, but I carried his words with me. If Max has nothing but his official salary and his own small income even their modest establishment must be in excess of their means. It's none of my business, however, and after all Max is his heir. But I should like half an hour's talk with Paul! It is hateful to conceive of a Paul shackled to inactivity; will Fate never cease to belabor him with blows!"

Orsena spoke rightly when he said the country was heading for Revolution. The events of the summer of 1845

provided a downhill course which culminated in the unheaval of October that year.

As this is a personal rather than an historical survey of Romanzian affairs, the account given in various letters will convey the best picture of what happened; and such letters must be read always with a view to what their contents would mean to the man still wandering forlornly over Europe, foreseeing the coming deluge and impotent to avert it.

The following is from a letter from the Countess Ardemil to her sister in Madrid:

"Indeed, my dear Marie, you are well off where you are, and I hope sincerely I may be able to join you. But the state of things here passes knowledge. I do not think the foreign news sheets give the slightest idea of the real trouble. You, at least, know how unpopular Her Majesty is, and the new tax on native wine has proved the last nail. It is impossible to convey to you the fury of the people. Ardemil" (her husband) "told me that Avala himself told Her Majesty that the Prince had always said it would be the utmost folly to levy it; whereupon she protested that the Prince was no longer Minister and she would govern as she liked. Really, Marie, I think she is mad! Carodi is detested more than the Queen herself, and most deservedly so, for it is undoubtedly he who drags her into these wild extravagances like the Jewel Fête last month. It was gorgeous but, my dear, what it cost the Treasury! And this while the people are starving, for the bad harvest has told terribly, and what with taxes and unemployment there is no end to the distress. But I ramble on and tell you nothing in order.

"As soon as it can be arranged Ardemil says I'm to return to Spario and stay with the children. It will be dull but really here there is too much anxiety. Ardemil seriously

fears a revolt and there are small riots continually. The *canaille*—but indeed I pity them—clamor for Prince Paul, and C. says he's the only physician to heal the sickness, but it's not to be expected he will come.

"To return then, here's the situation—a detested Queen; a Prince Consort who is a nonentity and has about as much influence with Her Majesty as my Blenheim spaniel; a hated Chief Minister; Carodi loathed so that he dare not show himself in some parts of the town alone; a people crying out for the rights and protection so lately given them, and so ruthlessly trampled under foot by the Ministry. She refuses still to call a Parliament. This wine tax was a new 'Order of the Council,' if you please! A court which all the more decent people avoid and not a single man in the Government, with the exception of Ardemil of course, who is worth his salt. The last straw of all is the resignation of Count Max, which comes on us to-day like a thunder-clap. It is really the last thread of hope for all of us. The tale already goes round that he spoke his mind last night to the Queen, about the wine tax perhaps—one hears other rumors, however—and because she would not listen to him, he resigned—or had to! You know he is married—a *mésalliance* I fancy. The Prince won't acknowledge her, but I called for all that. She is charming. They live in a quite small house very simply. When the news of the Count's retirement reaches the people, Ardemil says there will be trouble . . . Sunday is to be a great gala at the Opera. Her Majesty's orders to celebrate some birthday—report says Carodi's! I shall go. It helps no one to sit at home and fret, and if Ardemil insists on my sending in my resignation as lady-in-waiting and exiles me to the country, I must see what I can while I can . . .

"Wednesday.

"Dearest Marie, this far on Friday. I left it to finish and

our worst forebodings were right. Heaven knows if it will ever reach you! Awful things have happened. On Sunday, on the way to the Opera, Her Majesty's carriage was stopped by the mob and some one shot at her and killed—yes, *killed* —the Prince Consort! He flung himself before her just in time. They got back to the Palace and I don't know what happened there. Ardemil wanted me to go off with the children at once, but I flatly refused and in the end he gave way, and we sent off our two treasures and the excellent Pruth in charge, and went up to the Palace. I pointed out to him that as my resignation had not been sent in, it was my bounden duty to go to the Queen. He said all manner of angry things but he could not deny the fact. We went on foot. Early as it was the streets were full of people talking and idling; shops were mostly shut, and no business seemed to be done where they were open. The gates of the Palace were closed but only the ordinary number of guards. Ardemil says they are clamoring for soldiers and guns, but that Count Max persuaded the Queen to make no show of opposition or fear. It appears that he and his wife were on their way to the Opera when the crisis came, that he sent his wife back in the carriage alone and hurried to the Palace, getting there just before the mob arrived. He harangued them from the entrance steps, promised them redress, and commended them in the name of his brother to go home. They listened to him—they were amenable *then!* It was quite a miracle Ardemil says. Anyhow they went away. Messengers were sent to every barracks to keep the men under arms, but it was hoped the worst was over. That was last night while we were packing for departure.

"When we reached the Palace we found the most awful confusion, a vast number of people had already fled, and the only man able to keep any semblance of order was the Count. He took me straight up to the Queen. I asked him

as we went where his wife was, and he set his lips and said he hoped she got home safely. I saw how it was with him, poor dear man, and murmured that *his* wife was safe anywhere, to which he said gravely, 'Thank you, I am hoping so.' Rosa de Parva, the Countess Rosene, and the Rutzen girl were the only ladies left, it appeared. I found Her Majesty walking restlessly to and fro, clad in a *robe de chambre,* and on the bed lay her toilette for the Opera all stained with blood where the poor Prince had fallen across her. She looked at me but I doubt if she knew me. I induced her to put on a dress, and with some difficulty found a black one. I thought the change might help her but she seemed quite oblivious to it, nor did she answer anything we said. Now and then Count Max came up with news and she roused herself to listen. Some one brought us some food, but would not stay to serve it. The people were 'up' again in the city we heard, rioting and plundering. The servants were deserting fast. Rosa went out saying something about packing her trunk and went. We did not see her again, and later on Countess Rosene came in and told Her Majesty that her father had sent for her to go home. The Queen only nodded. I went out to speak to Count Max in the corridor. I asked him if he would not send for the Prince, and he said quietly that he had sent and was just sending again. I went down to the great Hall with him and saw there were soldiers posted everywhere, almost all the Orensē Guard. As we arrived a man rushed into the hall past the soldiers. He could not speak for lack of breath, but managed to gasp out that the mob had broken every window in the Duke of Avala's palace and he'd barely escaped with his life; and that the people were now attacking Carodi's apartments. The 41st Regiment had mutinied and were shut up in barracks by their officers with their own guns trained on them. Ardemil began saying he

must get me away, so I escaped him and ran upstairs to the Queen again. She looked up when I entered and said slowly as if she had difficulty in finding words: 'I thought you had gone too; why didn't you go?' We sat there, Marie, saying nothing for the longest hour in my life, and then Alicia Rutzen, going to the window, cried out: 'Look, look, there's a man running across the Park right up the hill!' The Queen got up and looked too. Marie, it was awful! You know the green slope from the outside gates to the Palace steps: well, the man had got into the Park somehow and was running up to the Palace, slithering and slipping as he ran; and outside the gates and railings the mob shouted and screamed, and then all of a sudden the railings went, and the mob were after him, and he got nearer and we saw it was Carodi. The Queen's white face went a sort of ashy grey, and I'm certain it was anger that lighted her eyes. She went across to the door. 'I am going down,' she said; and at that moment Reny Rutzen and the Larnac man rushed in past the Queen, and seized Alicia. 'The place will be stormed!' they cried, 'come away!' The Queen just looked round at them and went on. Alicia did hesitate, Marie, but they gave her no chance and carried her off and wanted me to come too. I ran after the Queen and caught her up on the stairs. I do not know what happened to Alicia and the two men and have not been able to hear. The Hall was full of soldiers and Count Max and Colonel Murca were giving orders. When Count Max saw the Queen, however, he cried out: 'Go back, Madame, for God's sake, go back!' But she said, 'Max, Carodi is at the door and the people after him, let him in.' 'The doors must not be opened,' he declared. But she put her hand on his arm, 'He's a coward, Max—but don't put his death too on me!' And the Count groaned and hesitated, but nearer the door they must have heard him knocking and calling, for

some one opened and he fell in, and got to his feet again and rushed to the Queen. Oh, Marie, I awake now at night remembering the terror on his face and the big cut on his head, and his clothes torn to rags—horrible! They tried to shut the door again—and then the dreadful, dreadful mad people rushed in and every one began fighting and flinging things, and a stone hit me on the head and I fell, and if Ardemil had not fought his way through to me, I suppose I should have been trampled to death! I do not know how he got me out of it but he did, and we are both alive . He is injured in his side but I trust not seriously, and my head is still in bandages, so I am a sight to be seen; but we are safe at Spario with the dear children, though it cost Ardemil over a hundred pounds to get out of Cardozza.

"And I can tell you nothing of what is now happening there, or if the Queen is alive or dead; no one seems to know anything. Ardemil has returned to Cardozza in spite of my insisting that since we are here safe, it was flying in the face of Providence to return—but if only he would have taken me, I should not have minded!—"

To form any picture of subsequent events we must turn to the account given by the Englishman George Trent and the various personal records obtainable.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE REVOLUTION

I

GRIM grey silence settled down over the wrecked Palace with the coming of evening. The mob, having scattered destruction there, had surged away to new fields and, far over the roofs of the city to the north, clouds of smoke—shot with pure gold—rose to the murky sky. It was down there in the labyrinth of streets that the mad crowd fought and howled, and spent its violent emotion in a riot of destruction again, with hideous, senseless clamor born out of chaos and unreason.

Here on the Palace hill no echo of it remained, except such as clung to inanimate objects. A dreary little wind flickered round corners and died in faint whispers in deserted corridors and silent rooms. On the great entrance steps of the Palace lay three dead soldiers and at the bottom of the steps, a boy in torn clothes lay in an odd crumpled heap.

The door at the end of the orangery clanged to, and the sound echoed with startling emphasis through the silent spaces. The mob had not penetrated here and the statues and trim green trees maintained their sense of decorous

remoteness from tumult and life, except that the silence seemed pregnant with omen.

The man who entered stood for a moment, unseeing, his strained senses just cognizant of the warning of still invisible, unguessed disaster. He came down the echoing length of corridor and steps through the swing door into a vestibule, a sort of *salle d'armes,* where he again stopped to listen. There was no sentry here as there should have been, only the same silence so laden with echoes and warning; and there, beyond the next door, lay a dead man—a footman. He saw an overturned chair and a great blue vase in splinters on the marble floor. He hung on his steps no more, but swept on through another vestibule, down long interminable passages and corridors as one driven by fierce and unsupportable dread, even by demoralizing fear. Then he came into the Great Hall—into a scene that clamored of what had been.

Torn and rent tapestries, a great picture prone on the floor; further on, a piteous fallen Venus with broken white limbs, horribly suggestive in the grey fading light; and up the stairs dead men in ugly uncouth positions. The big door stood open, and over the white steps and crimson carpet were the marks of innumerable heavy muddy feet. Here and there on the marble floor were bare footprints and dull stains—and near a pillar where lay a dead body and a stain, that was not dull. The meaning of it all raced on him with incalculable swiftness, rushed up, drowning his reason, surging over the last edges of self-control. There was a closed door opposite him. It led to some small anteroom and he would have pushed it open by the mere impetus of haste, but found it locked. His strength and his need made small matter of such material difficulties. His onslaught burst it open. The room was untouched. It was a small room where of old, Pages sat waiting; but on the floor now was something covered with a silken flag—something dimly

outlined. He forced himself to lift the covering. It was the Prince Consort! There was an untended cut on his forehead, and on his breast a stain. Some one had decently composed the dead figure but that was all.

For a moment he stood looking down; to his distraught mind there seemed mockery and accusation in the white face.

Then panic caught him again. With a queer choking cry he rushed from the room up the staircase, stumbling over the bodies of dead men, blundering into rooms strewn with wreckage and broken glass, darting through smaller untouched rooms, short cuts to his goal but leading to fresh evidence of the route the hurricane had taken; he hurried on to a suite of rooms surely remote from that awful path of destruction; and here at the very entrance a door was open swaying to and fro in some draught—within, wreckage—wilder, madder, more senseless still!

It was a big room; the canopied silk-hung bed, torn curtains, rent coverlet and sheets, were but items in the awful chaos of the whole. For it was here the fury of the hurricane had found its heart, recoiled on itself, and broken back into insensate rage with mere material things. He saw barely anything but stood swaying, staring at another man standing by an open bureau that stood near the window and opposite the swinging door. In the dull light he was only discernible as a stained, untidy figure with a roughly bandaged head and shoulder. He had been tying up some papers, sorting them with the aid of the arm that should have been in the empty sling, absorbed in his lonely task in that deserted place, till the sound of a footstep echoed loudly. He sprang round at its approach, thrusting the papers inside his coat, and his right hand gripped his revolver. His grey, worn face flashed into energy again at the emergency.

"Hands up!" His voice, the one living sound the other

had heard in all that vast waste of silence, flung itself against the echo, but the advancing man neither stopped nor put up his hands.

"Max!"

Instantaneously with his rush forward rather than with his cry a shot rang out, whizzing by his ear. The wind of it brushed his dulled wits into utterance, but the shot itself—that near rush of Death's wing—meant nothing to him.

"Where is she? Where is she, Max?"

The fierce passion of the cry would have its answer even from the staring, wondering man leaning against the wall gazing strangely at him.

"She's safe—for the moment. So it's you!—" His voice trailed off. "I nearly shot you." He looked stupidly at the revolver.

"But where is she?"

"Near here. I'll take you directly—mind my shoulder, Paul, it's rather smashed. I came back for these." He touched the papers showing under his coat. "There was a chance these might be found—and so I came."

He stared at his brother stupidly, but he hardly seemed to listen.

"Are you sure she isn't hurt? You are not keeping it from me, are you? Good God, if you've let her get hurt! Max!"

For Max suddenly fell back against the wall, covering his face and sobbing hysterically. The calm, self-possessed Max, whose steady nerves were broken at last by the long forty-eight hours of intense strain and overwhelming responsibility.

Paul took him by the shoulder (the uninjured one this time) and tried to turn him, and shook him.

"Max, pull yourself together. Is it a time to behave like

an hysterical girl? For Heaven's sake, stop it. Tell me where she is if you can't take me, damn you!"

And then he caught at some real understanding in the middle of this nightmare, and stopped shaking Max, and instead picked up an overturned chair and put his brother in it. He looked helplessly round the room for some water but, beyond a wide wet stain and a broken ewer, there was no sign of any. On the dressing-table, however, amongst the remnants of splintered glass and twisted gold, a bottle of smelling salts had escaped destruction, and with a dreary smile at its inefficient femininity, he took it back to Max. But he had already got hold of himself though he was still leaning forward with his head on his hands, but he was quiet, making heroic efforts to collect his mind and get mastery of simple material facts, such as that Paul's return relieved him of crushing responsibility, and that between them they could hope to get the Queen somewhere safe.

He looked up when Paul touched him.

"Sorry, Paul. It's been rather a strain. I wondered if you would come. We might go now."

The light was so dim they could hardly see each other's faces save in white patches in the sombre shadow. Max took the papers out of his pocket.

"You had better keep these. Come along."

They passed out into a wide corridor where were more dead and, at the end, a barricade of overturned furniture—costly cabinets, chests, inlaid tables, armchairs—piled up in confusion, splintered, battered, and smashed, mere *débris* left by the tide. Max threaded his way between them, speaking over his shoulder to Paul:

"They held this for nearly fifteen minutes, Camillo and five of the Guard, and that gave us time to get her away. Camillo came after us and he's in charge now. One moment, Paul—"

He stopped and knelt down, feeling in the darkness; then by the tiny light of a match, he turned over a dead man, holding the light close to the face.

"Enrico Lalli. I feared he had fallen."

He sighed as he spoke. Paul heard and did not hear. One half of his brain had taken in the fact that the dead men here and on the stairs were of the famous 19th Foot-guards, of whom two companies at least were of Orensē people. Those dead faces he had seen were of Orensē. But all this was an unreal nightmare, the only thing that mattered was to reach *her,* and see and know her safe! And here was Max concerning himself with dead men! He seemed to hear himself cursing his brother and telling him to hurry, with fierce words, but in reality he had said nothing, only wondered in mute despair at their slowness. Yet Max —whatever Paul thought—went swiftly, talking as he went, and sometimes his voice echoed oddly in the emptiness. They were mere bald facts he jerked out and it was only later, when circumstances made demand on his memory, that Paul knew he had taken in the words.

The last words, however, struck his consciousness most clearly.

"I left our people holding the stairs and ran up to her room and barricaded the passage as you saw. When I got to her there was not a woman left, except a servant of some sort—the right sort anyhow! She had got the Queen to put on a cloak and was trying to persuade her to go away. She flung herself on me and explained that she had a sister quite near in Stretta Royal, a milliner, and she knew the way through the servants' quarters, and—Well we got out. Camillo held the passage with Enrico till the last, but he got away, thank God! and caught us up in the street so we got to the milliner's. She's the right sort too! I asked her—the Queen—if there were anything they must not find.

Apparently, those papers. Mind the steps here! That's all, I think. Feel along the wall—here's the door."

They were out in the quiet street now, the clean pure evening all about them. The Stretta Royal was a modest, quiet thoroughfare with a few select shops scattered amongst private houses. The private houses, all shuttered closely or deserted, were but blind eyes; there were no passers-by; the streets were unlighted but there was light enough here to see, and in the sky a few faint stars were visible. Paul strode on till Max pulled him against the wall.

"That's the house," he said shortly; "but we must make sure we are not seen. Stay here."

He crossed the road, looked up and down, and knocked at the door of Madame Lucile, a Court milliner. The shop front was closed as were other shops. There was no sign of life about the place at all, but the door opened. Max looked back and beckoned, and Paul followed.

"Who's that?" demanded Orsena's voice.

"The Prince is here!"

Orsena choked back an exclamation.

The Prince, without seeing him, passed on into the dimly lighted shop where the high hat-stands—like monstrous long-legged birds with bodies conceived and born of nightmares—seemed bent on barring his progress and, like ghostly sentinels, were reflected in the interminable vista of mirrors. The Prince stopped, oddly bewildered. Then a mirror on a door swung aside and a woman entered. She wore a white apron and carried a knife in her hand. She stared at the tall stranger standing amongst her showcases and a fierce light flashed in her eyes.

An overwhelming feeling of unreality coupled with the wild incongruity of his brother's tall figure amongst these long-legged grotesque birds, the fierce white-aproned woman, the whole dim picture of it, flashed on Max with

a maddening sense of misfit so that he was within an ace of bursting into hysterical laughter, and had to gasp and snatch hold on himself to keep it back.

Then the Prince turned to him, and the look in his eyes steadied Max completely. He glanced at the woman, who gave a tiny sign.

"This way," said Max at last, in his own level voice, and pushed open another door which opened into a short passage. The door at the other end was open and opposite it, motionless—the very personification of waiting dread—sat Tessa as she had sat since Max had left her, without a word or movement.

She sprang up now;

"Max! Max!"

Her voice was hoarse with fear—and then it broke into a cry as some one—not Max—sprang forward; one cry, and his arms were round her and for a merciful moment fear and danger were shut out from her shattered, tortured mind.

Max pulled the door to, behind them, and went back to the shop. The maid, Nadia, was there now standing behind her sister, and they and Orsena broke into questions.

"He found me in the Palace," Max said curtly. "Of course he would come." Then to the women: "Get a meal ready of some sort. When did we last eat?"

The women disappeared. Orsena and he discovered possible defences at need in velvet ottomans and upturned chairs. Presently the Prince came out. He found them listening intently at the door, and he paused in the demand he had intended making and listened also.

It was far away still, but it was there, persistenly rising and falling, a muffled sound of voices.

"I think," said Max collectedly, "they are coming back this way; they may not come here, but Madame's maid-servant ran away when she recognized the Queen—and

I fired too late. We had, however, better eat while we can. They are getting some food."

As he spoke the two women appeared with trays of coffee and bread and butter.

"If Her Majesty can only be made to take some food," suggested Nadia. She looked helplessly at Max (she carried the smaller daintier tray). The big man stood in her way.

"Make her eat, Paul," said Max. His brother took the tray and went back with it to the inner room. The others all four ate without thinking of it, without words, always listening, with strained ears—Then it came.

It burst suddenly with immense volume as the crowd broke into the Stretta Royal shouting madly, and they could hear words now:

"The milliner's shop! The milliner's shop!" It echoed deafeningly.

The men began to push up the defences, Madame Lucile swooping off one by one the creations of art, and laying them instinctively in a show case. The last hat-stand Madame kept in her hand.

"I have no gun," she said to Max, "but this is useable."

"You must go inside!" Max said firmly.

Madame laughed.

"I?—but Nadia will stay with Her Majesty, she is of the Household; I defend my house. We are three, it is better than two."

"Bravo, Madame!" cried Orsena, whose eyes were beginning to shine with battle lust again. "That's the right sort of woman. She's right, Max—three are better than two." None of them counted on the Prince's help here, it appeared. Then they found him among them. Outside the mob had surged up and were shouting to them to open.

It was the Prince who took command.

"Stand ready to open the door," he said. "I am going to speak to them. Be ready to close it at once if they won't hear me, or rush it. If they do that, don't stop, close it on me. I can keep them off for a minute, and you must get her to the Orensē Palace by the back way, and to Arenzano afterwards. Camillo can delay them. Perhaps they'll hear me. Put out the light."

For a second Max wavered. Then the certainty that his brother's presence was their best protection brought him to obedience. The shuttered double glass door was opened and the Prince stepped out on the narrow steps, his big figure filling the space, and those within filled up the darkness behind him.

They saw him, recognized him, and the roar that greeted him was like that of a breaking wave echoing back and back. The wild, shouting, screaming, gesticulating mob carried torches, lamps, and burning sticks, and the glare lit up the darkened street—lit up also the face of the great Prince as he stood facing that murderous sea of uncaged passion, and they cheered him. And from the front the cry broke and rolled down the street, echoed in other streets, was taken up and tossed about the tortured city, as some spell breathing of safety and calm to come.

"The Regent! Prince Paul d'Arenzano! Our Prince! He is here! Prince Paul!"

So they voiced their wild joy and frenzied hope that here was a leader. His stern face never moved. He stood looking at them, and the cries died down round him to a whisper.

Then he spoke.

"People of Cardozza, mad disobedient children, what have you done? What have you to answer for? I gave you order, law, justice, and you trample them under foot as brute beasts. I leave you for so short a time and—"

They broke out, after being held in check for a moment by the magic of his presence.

"You left us and we starved—they robbed us. Come back to us, Prince. We starve!"

But before his flung-up hand they grew quiet again, and his voice went on:

"If you had wrongs, do you think you will right them this way, by dragging your country and yourselves in the dust before the eyes of the world? Do you not know what they will call you—mad rioters, fools without reason, deserving such Government as you get—worse," (His voice rose.) "thieves, murderers of women and children!"

He paused, and his eyes roamed over the sea of faces. Not a hand was lifted against him yet; a faint hope kindled in him. He spoke again saying he had returned to show them a better way; if they would disperse and return home he would on the morrow meet their leaders, he would stand between the Government and them, would be their arbitrator.

Then they broke out again, a wild fierce passion of desire firing them.

"Not arbitrator, not that! Leader! Governor! King!"

And at that the whole crowd took up the cry, with cheer and shout, so that his great voice seemed lost and drowned in the volume. But he held on and conquered, and it rang above the tumult.

"Who shall dictate to me, what I shall be and what I shall not be? By Heaven, if you think I am your puppet, I will leave you in your need. It is greater than you know. You follow *me*—not I, you!"

But as he spoke, some man climbing on the shoulders of a fellow lit an opposite gas jet which, shining straight into the shop, illumined the darkness behind him and, behind a

little circle of white faces was another face—whiter still—listening; and the lamp-lighter raised his voice and pointed:

"The Queen! The Queen! The Queen! In the room behind him! Drag her out—get her first!"

It was all instantaneous then. The howls of the mob were like hounds brought back to the scent by the crack of a whip. They screamed her name and Carodi's, coupled each and both with unspeakable epithets, and surged towards the shop—all reason scattered again by insensate cruelty and lust of hate.

And on the steps Paul d'Arenzano fought and struggled with the onslaught, holding his own only by reason of the narrow entrance, while those within piled up the barrier, leaving just the margin for his entry. A stone, aimed at the Queen, hurtled through the door and caught his head. Then a man mad with fury gesticulated wildly, tried to pass him, flung an evil name in at the petrified woman—howled it out once, and no more! The Prince caught him up and hurled him back on the crowd, a broken missile! They fell back before his arm then, and cringed at his words.

"Liars! Liars, all!" His great voice echoed in the room behind. "Liars and cowards!" They dragged him inside.

The result of his fierce onslaught had for the moment choked the narrow entrance with fallen men; they piled the heavy counters, ottomans and chairs, before the door, and in the comparative silence gasped and took breath. Some one turned up the light.

The Prince sprang to the Queen, who stood there with that dazed fixed look, and he caught the girl Nadia by the arm.

"The back way, show me; and you—" He turned to Max. "—Orsena and you, hold them, occupy ten minutes—five minutes—all you can!"

Nadia snatched a hat, a sort of hood arrangement, and

put it on the Queen, slipped a coat on her while Paul held her, and then they hurried out into the little passage leading to the kitchen, up some area steps and into a street. The cold air seemed like the breath of Heaven, but the clamor from the street before the house was greater and greater. Nadia stood listening.

"This way!" she said. They sped down a narrow path between the backs of houses into a great empty read, that opened on a street that was a mass of swaying, fighting people. Some one ran past them, turned, saw, and sped on with a cry. Nadia pushed her companions down a second intersecting path.

"That way," she panted. "I'll run on and decoy them!"

Before he could stop her (if he would), she was speeding down the road. He heard her call out, saw the man hurry up and catch sight of her, and heard the yell of triumph he gave. Then the crowd broke into the street—the prey well in view, stumbling now as it ran. He hurried down the narrow way with Tessa till the sounds were remote. She could hardly move. He spoke to her, told her they would be safe if she obeyed him, stopped and straightened the hood. They had to cross a main thoroughfare and a rather uncertain throng trying to decide which route would offer most sport, or most chance of pillage; dived again into a quiet side street, then into a narrow lane flanked by a wall. It was quite dark here and he felt along it gropingly, found what he sought—a door—and leaned her against it. There was no fastening but the lock and his hand went mechanically to his pocket, found a key—the master-key of the Orensē Palace! A moment more, the scratch of the key in the dark, and then! They were inside. The door shut, and Paul gave a sigh of thankfulness.

"Safe!" he whispered.

II

"Six shots and a sword," said Camillo gayly, "not so bad for a mob. What's yours, Max?"

"Six shots and a knife!" returned Max grimly, jerking out the hunting knife of his race.

Madame Lucile shook her hat-stand defiantly, she had knocked off the little red cushion at the end; the rough iron point looked nasty.

The beating at the door and the splintering of the glass against the shutters testified to the unabated fury against them. Max looked round, then pointed to the angle by the door to Madame's sanctum (where Tessa had waited), next the door to the back premises by which the Prince and the women had gone.

"That's our stand," he said. "We'll take it at once so as not to separate. Lock both the doors, Camillo, then if we go down it will take the longer."

"And give me the key," remarked Madame, as she swiftly undid her white apron and tossed it into a corner. The key she tucked into her hair. The two men noted both movements and Orsena murmured: "Bravo!"

"Kneel between us, Madame, and unhorse them with your lance," put in Orsena cheerfully. "There go the shutters; Max, give me first blood! Arenzano for ever! Ho la! Ho la!"

His brave voice rang out in the old hunting cry as the door gave and the tide broke through, struggling over the barricade. Orsena fired, and dropped his man before the other had surmounted the barricade obstruction.

"Wait till you can take two," cried Max, "then shoot!" They had the entrance now, flinging the barricade this way and that; stones hurtled through the air, smashing the silver mirrors and whizzing round the little garrison.

The little shop was like some cave into which vast waves swept roaring, retreated, and rushed on again. The shots did deadly work; seven dead men were piled up amongst the remnants of the furniture; one man mortally wounded coughed his life away in a corner. Still the insurgent sea swept on, for now things were equal, no more of that cursed shooting! The three held their corner, though Orsena had ceased his battle cry: he used his sword now, and the temper of the mob was open reading as stick, club, hatchet, and bare hands, flung themselves into the circle of death-dealing steel. He shouted still from time to time, but his voice was thick and choking. And from between the two men, Madame drove her formidable weapon amongst the legs of the on-comers, thrusting this way and that, doing ugly work; her face grim and set, her yes lit with savage fire that assuredly Madame's customers never dreamed slumbered in their calm depths. Count Max, on the right, worked silently, his left arm and shoulder were useless, but he dodged and dived and struck again till the long knife was red from hilt to point, and wounded men fell back with snarls, and dead men lay at his feet. But the execution was not all on their side. Knives and pointed sticks had ripped their clothes to ribbons, stones had struck them; one side of Madame's head was streaming; Orsena was fighting still and supporting himself against the wall, with a knife in his left thigh. Madame fell first. Some one else had perceived the advantage of a hat-stand as a weapon. Orsena saw her fall, averted his eyes, and tried to push her back, but the effort brought him to his knees. It was Max who dodged the attacker and struck sideways, and wrenched his weapon back with difficulty; and then suddenly, a pause, a queer momentary dizzying cessation, and a new move in the shrill hubbub without caught the ear.

For a second every head was turned to the door. Max

caught the moment to push Madame's body out of the way of trampling feet; then Orsena struggled upright again. One man withdrew his attention from the new cries without and drove at Orsena with a stake under the now failing sword arm; the sword dropped with a clatter as he reeled back on Max, who had swung round and once more driven his knife into the enemy. Orsena pitched forward, nearly upsetting him.

"Sorry, Max," he gasped, struggling to regain his balance. "Like me to fail you at a pinch."

"Can't you hold out?" Max's voice was urgently fierce. "They're going, I think—no—Oh, curse them!"

The last of the crowd now struggling for exit turned; perhaps the exit looked an affair of time which should not be wasted, but they turned anyhow.

"Finish them off first! The cursed Palace swine!" screamed a man and hurled a missile through the air at Max, but it struck Orsena's tottering, swaying figure, and he fell. Max stumbled back against the wall behind, now conscious only of noise indescribable, a rushing world slipping by him and a crawling something which struck upwards. Surely he struck in return but through hot flames of anguish—he too had failed Paul! And so unconscious, he fell across the door they had guarded for so gallant a long ten minutes!

With a joyful cry the remaining man sprang out of the shop: a woman had been seized running away! The Queen? Here was newer and hotter business. Quick, or there would be nothing for them to do!

The shop of Madame Lucile, Court Milliner, became still and quiet, but its remaining mirrors reflected other things than hats!

* * * * * *

Night settled down on the suffering city. Here and there

her nerves quivered and throbbed under the cruel clamor, but large areas lay silent and paralyzed.

In shuttered, silent houses nervous hands made little chinks so that sound and the fitful moonlight might enter, and white-faced people ate odd hurried little meals, all listening. In these areas where was silence, the sense of hearing seemed most acute.

In the active nerve centre, people stopped their ears, muffled the heads of their children, and prayed for silence. The streets, lit here and there by solitary lamps and the glare from some pillaged shops where gas jets still blazed, were easy walking.

A neatly clad man, who seemed neither in haste nor fear, stopped at the corner of the Stretta Royal under a gas jet to peer up at the name of the street. It did not seem to help him much when he had deciphered it. He looked round doubtfully, then took out of his pocket a motley collection of things which he laid on a convenient window-ledge and regarded with pleased satisfaction. There was a morsel of china (a connoisseur might have prized it), a remnant of silk tapestry, a bent shoe-buckle, a silver thing—it was impossible to say what—twisted into a sort of ball, suspiciously stained, and a carved ivory rosary.

"Can't go back yet," murmured the man, thrusting them into his pocket again. "Anyhow this part is safe as Hyde Park. I wonder if there's anything down here. I saw a gas jet burning." He talked softly to himself as if he found company in his voice, and he did not speak Romanzian but English, which accounted for his unfamiliarity with the streets. He went towards the illuminated shop.

It was a hat shop, though its chief commodity did not at present seem to consist of hats—up the narrow entrance and over the velvet pile carpet lay dead bodies of men in uncouth, strange attitudes. The strange man stood on the top steps,

the light in his alert eyes shining with curiosity. Then he saw in the angle by two doors three bodies lying, one apparently a woman; and he stepped in, his quick mind trying to visualize the scene that hed ended in this.

"But why here?" he muttered, frowning. Then he saw that one of the dead wore uniform, and a military sword lay on the floor. The man lay on his side, his head on his arm, and his face was more than peaceful—it was as if a look of exultation had been fixed there by Death's arrow. But he had made no mistake; he was dead. The man, whose name was Trent, (a mere travelling Englishman), laid his long limbs straight with gentle hands.

"I suppose they were forgotten," he thought. "Good Heavens! What a fight!"

He looked round again and then moved the dead woman. There was also no mistake here, and he hurriedly sought a decent covering for the poor remains. In another corner lay a crumpled linen apron, and he spread it over her face, and again viewed the scene. He reconstructed it better. That was a revolver on the ground. It helped to account for the dead men. No, two revolvers and a sword. What a fight! The man lying face downwards before the door was dead too, of course. If he had not been here in the fatal corner, he would hardly know if he were one of the mob or not. His clothes hung in tatters on him. His arm had been roughly bound up, but the bandage had slipped. His shirt (there was hardly any of it left) was rent in ribbons. He still held an odd big knife in his outstretched hand. Trent looked at it narrowly. Here was a relic worth collecting. He turned him over carefully, and it seemed to him his face looked less frozen than the others. From a clean cut on his temple the blood was oozing in little drops, very, very slowly. It took Trent a moment to take in what that meant, for he was no medical student. Then

he suddenly recollected and, in a frenzy of excitement, tore open the remains of the shirt and tried to find the heart. Yes, surely something, some machinery still measured the failing pulse of life!

Here indeed was adventure such as he had never dreamed of! He saw the ugly knife low down in the side. Must it come out? It was not work he liked or had done, but he had some common-sense and some memory: it was no use to pull it out if he had no bandage. He looked at the apron but could not touch it; he tried the doors and found to his surprise they were locked.

"Caught in a trap, poor wretch!" he muttered.

Strangely enough it was only one man to him now. An overturned ottoman lay on its side disgorging hats—wide, narrow, trimmed and untrimmed—tangled silks, and a linen cover. He caught at that, made shift with a knife he picked up to slash it into strips, and then made his first attempt at surgery. It was ugly work and it looked very unprofessional, but it seemed effectual. There was a wound on the shoulder too and he bound it up; then it struck him the half-dead man was cold. Near the door lay a rioter in a long coat—a sort of street orator—he would need a coat no more. But it would serve as a covering. Trent went to the door and looked out. No, there was nobody. If he wanted help he must fetch it. The Public Guard were no good, he'd learned that already. A hospital was what he wanted. He sat down on the floor by his patient, pulled a book out of his pocket and sought assistance from the wonderful Murray. He was, as has been already said, a man of common-sense and, impatient as he was to fetch help, he realized that a knowledge of the route to the nearest hospital was more likely to serve his haste than an insufficient general idea of direction; so he sat cross-legged on the floor till he had gripped it.

"First to the right—no, to the left, I'm facing the Palace. First to left, second to right, across the Square, and to right again—no distance!" He shut the book, sprang up and, having given one last look at the living man, hurried out.

* * * * * *

In the vestibule of the Hospital of St. Peter, weary women and nurses from the newly founded Institute hard by, students and doctors, passed to and fro, srtuggling to deal with the flotsam and jetsam the revolutionary tide swept up to its open door. For twenty-four hours they had gone on incessantly, the women scarcely able to stand took rough orders from exhausted doctors, swearing in their weariness as they selected fresh patients. Through the throng a man shouldered his way to a group of men, just pausing for a breath of air before returning to work.

"I've found a wounded man," he began, and they laughed.

"By Æsculapius! we've found several hundreds!" scoffed one voice. "You'd better keep him; we've enough."

"He'll die if he's not seen to, he's badly hurt." Trent struggled to keep his temper. His Romanzian was imperfect, it was possible he might not understand them. The speaker shrugged his shoulders.

"A good lot will die, he'll have company," he remarked, and went away.

Trent flushed scarlet and looked around. The babble of tongues in partially understood language got on his nerves.

"I'll come with you," said a quiet voice at his elbow, "if it's not far." He was an unobtrusive looking student, with steady grey eyes.

Trent spun round thankfully.

"Stretta Royal, a milliner's shop," he said.

Someone else looked up.

"Oh yes, they killed that woman just beyond."

Trent and the student went out. An improvised ambulance was just being unloaded. They commandeered it and went off.

"Odd stories one hears," remarked the student jerkily; "only one's no time to find out. Some say the Queen's killed!" He eyed his companion curiously.

"Brutes!" muttered the other, and then aloud: "It's jolly exciting for a chance visitor! I've been collecting souvenirs. Wonder how it will end?"

The student shrugged his shoulders.

"If we had the Prince back—there's a wild tale he's been seen. Rot, of course, but there are all sorts of stories, best believe nothing. Is this the place?"

"Yes, the floor's rather littered up," he remarked grimly, and went in. It was all as he had left it—and the wounded man lay still though Trent fancied his hand had moved as if groping for something.

"He's alive right enough now," his companion said. "Is this your work?" and pointed to the bandages with a grin.

Trent said "Yes" curtly. "I've no knowledge," he protested.

"Well, we're wasting our time, you know. He won't last till we get there; still, if you're bent on it."

"I am," returned the other shortly. They got the wounded man into the ambulance, then the student went back and looked at the women, and then came out again.

"Sharp fight there!" he said, "But it's no use, you know, he'll die." They spoke no more, but the Englishman's jaw had closed in a manner that betokened he intended to fight for his own way, even in the face of Death.

At the hospital again they had to wait long. One and another cast a glance at their charge, shrugged their shoulders and passed on. The student went away, presently he returned.

"There's a bed if we wait," he said, grudgingly; "a man's just died. When he's out, we'll take your friend up: it's out of turn but I know the nurse."

"He's not my friend," began the Englishman, but the other did not hear. Here was an Englishman, mad, of course. There would only be a fuss if one crossed him. He'd met English people before.

At last the long ward and a nurse—and a bed with the clothes still tumbled!

"Get him to bed, and I'll see whom I can send," said the student.

The nurse looked her despair.

"Can't you help?" she said sharply; "I can lift no more!"

"I'll help," said the Englishman. The student grinned and disappeared. Under directions Trent assisted to get the man undressed, and shivered at the sight of his injuries.

"It's almost wasting time," said the nurse, wearily.

"It isn't," retorted Trent, fiercely. "I don't care what you say, he must live! I want to know about that fight!" Then he added, looking at the ashen face: "I wonder who he is."

The nurse looked. Her face assumed a puzzled expression.

"See if his clothes are marked," she said. "I'll be back directly." She moved off to another patient.

Trent took up the tattered coat. There was a handkerchief marked with an *A* in cypher; a letter-case pierced through, which he did not open; and a leather card-case, which he did. When the nurse returned he was still standing looking from the card to the man on the bed. He put it in her hand.

"That's who he is," he said shortly. "If stories are true, it accounts for the fight."

The nurse read: "Count Maximilian d'Arenzano, 10, Stretta Nichosa."

She gasped with horror and excitement.

"Saints protect us! This must be reported instantly!" She rushed off again with the card in her hand and Trent remained staring down at the wounded man. Count Max d'Arenzano—that was the late Foreign Minister who had just resigned to the despair of the remnants of the young Liberal Party. But this was quite a young man, hardly more than twenty-five or tweny-six, younger than Trent himself, who boasted of thirty-two summers and was beginning to think it time to settle some definite plan in life.

Then there was an arrival of surgeons, and helpers. Screens were produced and other beds pushed further away. Trent wandered out into the corridor. An official of the hospital came to him.

"You are the man who found Count Max," he said abruptly; "may I ask if you know him?"

Trent explained the position hurriedly.

"Yes, but some one must tell his wife," interrupted the worried man. "We can spare no one. Can you take word in the morning?"

Then half irritably he added: "There are these ridiculous rumors about the Prince's return, of his speaking—absurd, of course; he'd have been with Count Max. Well, there's my room, if you want to rest."

Trent had to accept, he was tired out and conscious of irritability that kindled itself against the Secretary, odd impatience; wished he'd stop speaking of those beastly politics—all Greek to him. But he hoped, hoped wildly, that the man upstairs would get round.

"What a fight!"

CHAPTER XXVII

MAX

I

THE Prince groped his way down a dim passage and along a silent corridor and so into a room where much of his life had been spent. Here he laid the Queen back in a chair and gently disengaged her clinging hands.

"You are quite safe here, my beloved, in my own house!" he whispered.

He lit a candle mechanically and looked round at the chilling order of a dis-used room. There must be servants somewhere. Donati was in charge.

Having tucked a wolf skin round her he went out to find assistance.

To the amazed Donati and his wife he gave certain sharp orders for food to be brought to the library and a bedroom to be got ready.

There was no room kept ready but His Highness's own, it appeared. That was always aired and prepared.

"Count Max's," he said quickly.

Their quarrel had no place in the memory of this Paul. The timid reminder that his brother was not living at the Palace cut him to the heart. But he had to shut down his

mind on the subject of Max, that was a sick dread to be faced later.

He gave a few more directions and returned to the Queen.

The light and warmth had roused her, but she was shaking with terror to find herself alone, and he soothed her with endearing words and caressed her as one might to calm a frightened child.

Presently he coaxed her to eat the food they brought. Wearily at first but then aware of sudden exhilaration in the nearness of her presence and the proximity of her little white face as she hid it against him and refused to eat.

Slowly a sense of security gained on her, and he persuaded her to go and rest upstairs until such time as he could safely take her farther.

He left her at the door of the room with old Luca, the happier for the assurance he gave her that it was his own room.

All the while, in his mind, he was making plans. He went to the stables, made arrangements, wrote notes to be delivered on the morrow; out of sight of her he was aware of the aching desire to know something but dimly connected with the present safety of the Queen of Romanzia; something he had no time to know!

At last he lay down. They were to call him in an hour, but he woke before it had passed, starting up with a cry of "Max!" and finding an empty darkened room and a dead fire.

He had to fetch the Queen; she would not leave the room without him.

They must walk a little way, the carriage would await them in a street near by. He felt her reawakened terror as they went though she uttered no sound. Old Donati accompanied them. He had a last reminder for him:

"Remember, if you get news, the swiftest horse possible, to overtake us."

Through the night they drove, the sound of the quick hoofs preceding them through space and leaving a train of echoes behind. Safe through the city; out into the new unfinished suburbs; into the hilly country amongst the vineyards and walled gardens; into open uninhabited country—and she lay in his arms, still and quiet, only now and then her hands quivered and pressed his. Sometimes he thought she slept and refrained from movement, though the cramped position tortured his long limbs: sometimes he spoke to her, spoke of the moon descending in the heavens, of the night scents of the earth, wafted in to them. And through all the long hours he strained his hearing to catch some faint echoes of pursuing feet, some lilt of a galloping horse, something to ease—or forever fiix—the sick aching at his heart. *"You will hold it ten minutes, five minutes—"* Between whiles he tried to remember what he had said to Max and could recollect nothing but curt short words of question and command.

The first cold shiver of dawn came on them at the frontier. Here they had to stop, yet he welcomed it, welcomed the chance to look back along the empty space of road, wanly visible now in the grey light.

Tessa slept again. The dawn was cold and he held her close. When he kept his eyes on her piteous little face he could still his own agony; it was merely an exchange of pain for pain. The day dropped out of the night sadly, without enthusiasm. It was still faint dawn when they entered the forest land, but grey morning when they emerged.

He left her safely at the Castle, but even so his journey was not yet over. He must go to Melino this time, to Orsena's house.

And to the friend of his youth he said, with a voice old in sorrow:

"I have left your son to almost certain death—and eternal honor!"

And Orsena drew up his brave figure (so like Camillo's) and said:

"Camillo could but do his duty, my Prince."

But the Prince bent his head.

"You shame me, Orsena. I left Max with him and I am cursing Fate!" Then he caught his breath and pulled himself up, turning to the Countess Orsena with her stricken face and brave eyes.

"And you, Countess, if you can find it in your heart to help those for whom Camillo was content to die, then I want you now to return to Arenzano with me, for she is there and no women but servants to help her."

The Countess looked at her husband, and then at the Prince.

"I will be ready—in ten minutes." The Prince pressed her hand and she left them.

Then he turned and told what he knew.

"I cannot think they have escaped," he said; "they would hold it to the end!"

Orsena nodded.

"To the end, of course. I will go to Cardozza and enquire; and you?"

"I return as soon as I may. Say nothing: only a few know I was there. Did you know Max and I had quarrelled?" He spoke brusquely.

Orsena put his hand on his arm.

"It takes two to quarrel. I have seen Max. I do not think he considered it a quarrel."

"God forgive me, Orsena; you've sorrow of your own. Forget mine!"

He walked away abruptly; but in Orsena's heart the sorrow that ran deepest was grief for the man bereft now of all he loved, and condemned not to death but to life.

II

The city, like some wounded animal, lay waiting with weary eyes the going and coming of the one physician in whom her faith was fixed. The stream of departing carriages ceased, for their physician had said he would do nothing for the fugitives if they deserted their city, and would not answer for their houses and treasures, and estates. And when there had been a low muttering of "The Queen has gone." "Why not?" he had burst out in tempestuous wrath; "the Queen is safe, no thanks to you who left her and a handful of men to face destruction, while you saved your own skins! No, I will not tell you where she is, but she shall return—when you are fit to have her."

If they secretly thought the fitness might be on the side of her who was the figure-head, at least, of the evil, they did not say so aloud, for the Prince must not be angered: their safety, even perhaps their lives depended on him, the only possible intermediary between themselves and this horrible apparition, this hydra-headed monster of under-world life. How or when he had arrived amongst them, few knew; but it was known that he had called one morning on Avala, who was a mere flabby heap of nerves: that the same afternoon there was another meeting and the Prince was there. One knew not just where he would be next, only one might sleep safely in one's bed so long as he *was* there, with one hand on the monster's throat—or was it on his head merely?

Thus the upper world, with its claim for unruffled blue sky and serenity of atmosphere that it might pursue its pleasures untroubled. But what of the lower world that had tasted blood. Anarchy stood still, snarling yet but arrested

by the touch of one hand, and those who had unchained her waited, hating the fruits of their works and sick at heart at what they had unchained, while the strong fingers of the one man—cunningly, skilfully, surely,—buckled the restraining muzzle of order and law over those dangerous jaws. The Prince was in hourly jeopardy. A careless word, an impetuous action on either side, and he might fall. But he came and went unmoved, heedless and imperious.

He had scorn for either side, but slowly, he gathered up the threads of his lost power. Hour by hour, the straps of the muzzle tightened; hour by hour those who had been in power retreated, leaving him more elbow room. It was actually a question of hour by hour, interspersed with short wild outbreaks of fury among the populace, and similar outbreaks of panic amongst the higher folks. And he played one party against the other with consummate skill, gathering together round him the men who could help—all but the one man who would have been such a tower of support to him.

Twice a day he sent to the Queen with a hurried line of his well-being. All day long and all night he toiled and worked for her, and all the time an unappeased stifled cry in his heart for Max had to be ruthlessly silenced; and always before him was the hour when there would be time, and it would not be silenced.

For two days and nights he had toiled, snatching sleep and food when he could, and then coming away in the evening from a stormy interview with the War Minister, he met Orsena, who had indeed tracked him there and waited for him. He had not seen him since he had taken him the news of Camillo's fate, and borne off from him his wife to hide her own sorrow in comforting the stricken Queen.

Orsena seemed agitated.

"Prince!" he began hastily. "I want you. I've my carriage here, you must come."

The Prince shook his head: "I must, on the contrary, go down to Radichi."

"No, Radichi must wait. You must come. I have news for you."

The Prince looked at him swiftly:

"You have found him!—them!" He spoke mechanically, and as mechanically walked towards the carriage. Orsena said nothing till they were seated, then he said quietly:

"I found my boy's body after a long search, in the mortuary of St. Peter, where all those found in the milliner's shop were taken—eleven dead men, my Prince, and one woman—" His voice choked. "They did their part—our three. There were ten men of the street." He spoke slowly now; "and the woman—and my boy."

He stopped.

The Prince's eyes were on him, and he said:

"And what of my boy?"

"Not there! I hunted again."

He stumbled as he spoke, tried to hurry, but the recollection of that search was a memory from which his senses reeled. He went on quickly:

"I went to the Hospice and the hospitals, and there at last I found him, this afternoon only—my Prince, he is alive, thank God; and I thank Him I am allowed to bring you the news."

There was silence, but the Prince had room only for the one thought. *Max was alive!* The amazing relief was like physical pain. He could neither speak nor move.

Orsena pressed his hand.

"He is very ill, but Heaven will certainly spare him to you now," he whispered.

And at that the Prince awoke to something outside him-

self, to the generous unselfishness of his friend that could so sincerely rejoice in the mercy vouchsafed to another, and denied himself.

"Orsena, my friend," he began and stopped.

Orsena spoke hurriedly.

"I know what you would say, but, Prince, my boy was a soldier. It was what he was there for—to give his life at need. Max stands for more. If one had to die—" he stopped. "Here we are at St. Peter's Hospital. By the way, it was an Englishman who saved him—a man called Trent."

The Prince repeated the name as he got out.

The vestibule was comparatively empty now, but those there recognized him instantly. Hats went off, and a great surgeon coming out stopped, and accosted him.

"Your Highness, I have just left the Count. May I take you up? He will probably not know you, but he is better."

They went up, the eyes of all following them.

The long ward was no longer disorderly, but on one side the narrow beds were slightly closer to each other than of old; and at the far end was a screened off space. A nursing sister came round the screen, clearing away the last evidences of the surgeon's evening visit.

The Prince stepped past the screen.

On the bed lay a motionless bandaged figure that the very bed-clothes might hardly touch, but except for one head bandage his face was hardly marked. One arm, the uninjured one, lay outside the clothes; the other was strapped across his chest. The light from the shaded candle fell across the foot of the bed. He lay in the shadow and beside him was a girl who was no nursing sister. The Prince neither saw nor heeded her. He stood looking down at his brother, who, they said, might live. It took so much to kill an Arenzano! The girl drew back into the shadow but

her eyes were intent on the visitor. She seemed ready to fling herself between the big man and that dear motionless form that was her world of men. The Prince came near and bent lower, went on his knees by the bed and touched the outstretched hand.

"Speak to him, your Highness," said the surgeon.

The slight antagonism in the eyes of the girl, died out at the sound of his voice.

"Max, Max, you saved us. I knew I could trust you!"

The surgeon, watching the white face, signed to the Prince to go on speaking.

"Little Max, try to understand. You saved her! You must live. I'm wanting you, little brother!" He used the old patois word with its endearing diminutive, his voice broke over it, and he bent again and kissed the "little brother's" hand.

Max opened his eyes.

"I'm glad I didn't fail you, Paul," he whispered.

* * * * * *

After that the Prince came twice a day except that every third day by dint of travelling at unholy hours he spent the evening with the Queen at Arenzano. He seemed hardly aware of the presence of the girl in the grey dress until one day, looking back, he saw her bend and kiss Max—and then she followed him slowly. He waited for her in the corridor, and when she would have passed, he stopped her.

"Who are you?" he asked, and she met his look with brave eyes.

"I am Philippa, Max's wife, you know."

"Max's wife!" he repeated, frowning. But he might frown as he liked. Philippa had seen the love in his eyes as he gazed at his wounded brother, had noticed the caressing touch and heard the tender note in his voice. She feared

him no more, but she would ask no favor of him; Max would have resented it, only if they might make friends it would be well.

"How do you thing Max is to-day?" she asked, really desirous of his unmedical opinion.

"The doctors say better."

"But you, yourself?" she urged. "Seeing him all day, it is so difficult to tell."

He looked at her with new interest, and a tinge of jealousy: she was there all day with Max!

"You don't think him better?" she faltered.

"The doctors must know. Do you sleep here, at the hospital?"

"No, I go back at night—if he's no worse."

"You are going back now?"

"Yes."

"You must let me see you home."

"Thank you, but Mr. Trent always comes to walk back with me."

"Trent! That's the man who found Max?"

They were walking side by side down the long bare corridor. He was aware at last that she was in outdoor dress, also that she was pretty.

"Yes, he found Max. He has been very kind to us," she said quietly.

"Why don't you drive?"

"We've no carriage now."

Such an unheard of state of things caused him unreasoning anger. It was as if they had mislaid some necessity of life.

"There are plenty at the Orensē Palace."

"But there's no room for a carriage in our little *appartement.*"

He frowned again.

"You are living in an *appartement?*"

"Yes, only since a month ago. A whole house was too much for two people."

He cast a swift glance at her. But her childish face was innocent of intent to wound. She waved her hand to some one at the foot of the sairs.

"There's Mr. Trent," she explained.

"But you can't walk backwards and forwards through the streets with a stranger, child."

The idea shocked him.

"Indeed I can, it is a great deal better than being alone, and he isn't a stranger now."

"Introduce him!"

She did it instantly on their approach, gravely, and with a dignity he had hardly expected.

"This is Mr. Trent, Prince d'Arenzano, and he saved my husband's life."

It was perfect. Not the shadow of blame on the man who had refused to accept her, not a shade of waiving her own rights. The Prince appreciated every word and smiled quietly. Mr. Trent looked rather abashed.

The Prince spoke in English—very nearly perfect English, Trent noted.

"There is no wiping out of the debt we owe you, Mr. Trent; but bear in mind there is nothing here in Romanzia that is not yours, if it is within a man's power to get it for you. And I want your details, come and see me. I am generally back at the Orensē Palace by eleven at night, if it's not too late for you."

Trent murmured rather awkwardly that he'd "be pleased to come."

The Prince nodded and turned to Max's wife.

"I'll drive you back," he said decidedly.

She drew herself the least bit more erect.

"Mr. Trent has been waiting some time for me," she said, with admirable firmness. "I should prefer to walk, thank you all the same."

She made him a little bow, and went off, leaving him standing on the last step, a little nonplussed, a little angry, and a little—a very little amused.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TO SAVE HER CROWN!

COUNT MAX did live, and after long weeks was taken to Arenzano with his wife, where he made a complete recovery.

The Queen remained at Arenzano, and the Countess Orsena manfully shouldered the burden of responsibility the Prince had laid on her, and assumed control of the domestice arrangements of the Castle. Very few saw Her Majesty. Her terror of strangers embraced all but those the Prince himself brought and presented to her; even then she appears to have had little sense of security in the Prince's absence.

One day in Cardozza he met the plucky little Countess Ardemil, and she stopped him.

"Prince," she said wistfully, "how is Her Majesty? If I can be of any service to her, call me. I did not desert her, you know, but my husband carried me off when I was insensible. He declares he is willing to take even your blame for doing it."

The Prince smiled and shook his head.

"I have blame for no one. I think the Queen would be glad to have you with her."

Apparently she was, for the following letter is dated "January 27, 1846."

"The Castle of Arenzano.

"My dear Marie,

"You will be bewildered at the address with which I head my letter. In truth I am a little bewildered myself. I think Ardemil would have refused to let me come had he dared, but Her Majesty had no ladies of her own at all, and mine is the only familiar face about her. None but those of the Prince's household, or of Orensē itself are allowed here.

"But I must relate my story coherently. The one thing at my command is unlimited leisure and I propose to inflict on you a lengthy description of affairs.

"Arenzano is all and more than my childish recollections painted it. I am perpetually losing my way in passages and little anterooms; nevertheless, Her Majesty's apartments, when reached, are comfort itself. I believe they compose the suite that was arranged for the poor Count Sylvestro and his wife, and have been unused since her death. They are cheerful enough, however, and overlook a lovely garden, where the Queen can walk on suitable days, without fear of encountering any strange face, for her terror of people and strangers is very great.

"When I arrived the Prince himself took me up to her. She was sitting by the fire doing nothing—oh Marie, such a pitiful wreck of all she was. I saw her eyes brighten as the Prince entered but, though she had known I was coming, she almost sprang up with fright and clutched his arm, and her eyes were like a frightened child's. He was very gentle and patient, and soothed her without apparently noticing her fright; then he presented me, and said:

" 'The Countess bears the mark of her loyalty. I think we can hardly find her more honorable decoration, can we?'

"Should this reconcile me to the horrid little scar on my forehead?

"Our days pass very quietly. Occasionally, the Queen takes it in her head to wander round the Castle, one of us goes with her but she seldom speaks. She will sit for hours gazing at nothing, while the Countess Orsena and I read and work. After lunch at noon, we persuade her to go out if possible in the garden or courtyard. She will not go beyond the gates except with the Prince.

"But when the Prince is here all is different. Mostly he arrives at six in the evening, having driven at full speed all the way. He dines with us and the marked difference in her must, I fear, mislead him as to her real state. Afterwards he sits with her for two hours, and even plays some simple game of cards which she has taught him. When she retires he interviews the household, and at the hour when we settle in to sleep, he is racing back to Cardozza as fast as horses can go. Occasionally, he arrives in the early morning for a whole day and leaves in the evening. Then he takes Her Majesty out in a sledge, but these are rare occasions. He says Count Max is recovering, and hopes shortly to bring him here with his wife."

"February 18.

"I rejoice that my former letter reached you so speedily. That was owing to the Prince's kindness in forwarding it by an official courier going to Mantos. . . Count Max has arrived. He stood the journey very well but he certainly still needs recovery and I hope he will find it here. The Countess is as sweet as ever. Her attitude towards His Highness is charming. His care for her is perfectly lovely. I betray no confidence if I say the desolating fear that the d'Arenzanos might be left without a direct heir is dispersing.

"The Queen has taken to the Countess fortunately. She insisted on going to see Count Max directly he was installed

in bed after the journey, and I must admit she behaved admirably.

" 'We have come to the only place in the world where we can get well, Max,' she said. 'Let's pretend there isn't any other world.' And he said he was ready enough.

"Imagine my surprise and joy to-day when the Prince arrived with my children and the good Pruth. He had arranged it all with Ardemil as a surprise to me.

" 'I could not risk losing you,' he said; 'and these little ones were weaving spells to carry you off.' He would hear of no thanks. 'Nothing can repay those who stood by her,' he said, almost sternly. Believe me, Marie, my fullest letters convey nothing of the deep currents which are bearing us along, and of which I would not write if I could."

II

Early in March we find them all discussing the Queen's return to Cardozza, which politically was much to be desired, but which in face of her unwillingness was very difficult to manage. However, in the end, her consent was secured; the possibility of seeing the Prince more frequently may have influenced her.

Her consent, however, was not the only difficulty. It was necessary not only that she should return, but that the return should be as public and impressive as possible—no Royal fugitive creeping back to a shaken throne but a Queen returning to her capital as a token of pardon to her rebellious subjects. There were still ferment and factions which foreboded danger to her personally, but which danger again could not be ousted save by her presence and outward demonstration of her unbroken power. It was a cruel dilemma, and the Prince must have had good reason for his decision. Events proved him right but also demanded of him or of his family heavy sacrifice.

On April 4th, the Countess writes:

"The return is fixed for April 14th, ten days hence. Heaven grant all goes well. Ardemil insists that the Prince is right and it is necessary, but he is clearly apprehensive of possible trouble. Frankly I told them all that I did not believe the Queen's reason would survive any further shock of riot or disaster.

" 'No,' said the Prince quietly. 'We must eliminate the possibility.'

"We were all seated round the fire discussing it, the Queen having retired.

" 'It is not organized trouble I fear,' said Ardemil; 'but individual rash action. Who drives with her beside yourself, Prince?'

" 'I do,' said Max.

"Instantly Countess Philippa put her hand on his arm:

" 'Then I go too,' she announced fiercely.

"And they all stared at her, and Max caught her hand and kissed it. She went on eagerly.

" 'It is far the best thing there should be another woman with her, and they won't hurt Count Max's wife! They didn't before.'

" 'They shall have no chance, my dear,' cried Max. 'I'd never permit it.'

" 'But you must—Think how it safeguards her,' urged Philippa.

" 'Impossible! Paul, you know it is, say so!' And he turned to the Prince with entreating eyes.

"But the Prince got up, and, pushing the logs together with one foot, said:

" 'Yes, it's impossible—and yet she's right, Max!'

" 'There!' exclaimed the Countess defiantly. 'You see, Max! Either it's not safe for the Queen to go or it's safe for me.'

"But even as she said it, she got a lovely color for she knew it was not the same. It was the journey and the strain for her at this time that was weighing on us, otherwise it was only too true. Count Max is almost as great an idol of the people as the Prince, and his wife's presence would ensure respect and order in the most turbulent crowd. Even when they came down here, rumors of their starting got about and flowers and green wreaths were hung on the carriage and flung in at the windows; and they cheered her when she leaned forward to thank them.

"Ardemil insisted on my going away to bed.

" 'They must settle it themselves,' he said grimly when we were alone. 'I'm glad it's not my wife in question.' I pointed out that I thought the Countess's wish to go was quite as much a fear of being separated from her husband as desire to serve the Queen, which annoyed him. Men are so oddly blind! In her place I'd want to do the same, after what occurred on their last separation, but these men won't see that. They'll just go thinking only of the Queen. If she had given her real reason they'd have laughed at her. Still, as it's Max and not Charles that's in question, I think she ought not to go!"

But the Countess Philippa got her way. She undertook the tiring journey and the really terrible nervous strain of the public entrance, and so far as the public knew there was no disturbance at all.

The Prince sat by the Queen, and Countess Philippa and Count Max opposite. Just outside the House of Assembly the carriage stopped for the salute of the Royal Guards, and the crowd, who had been ominously silent and sullen all the way along, became restive. The Queen was looking at the Prince, the Prince keeping her attention away from the people, but the Countess was watching the crowd and some one

levelled a pistol at the Queen. It was knocked up instantly and the man thrust back, and a woman's voice cried out:

"Shame, Shame! It's the Countess!"

The carriage moved on, and the Countess had not moved nor said anything. Her husband put his arm round her and she smiled at him.

The Queen was safely installed in the Breda Palace, lent by the Duchess of Alquarto at the Prince's request, until such time as the Royal Palace should again be ready for occupation.

But that night the hopes of an heir for the House of Arenzano were, for the time being, shattered.

III

The Queen once more in the capital, the Prince's intercourse with her quickly assumed a different character. He restricted himself to the formal visits obligatory on even an overworked Minister, never saw her except in the presence of her ladies and in every way sought to stamp out any spark of gossip which her escape and her sojourn at Arenzano might occasion. It was doubtless necessary. Moreover, though the throes of the Revolution had overthrown many things, they had not overthrown the Prince's pride. It might have been shaken to its foundations but the foundations were firmly established. It is quite easy to find motives for his attitude, in spite of the self-revelation which those terrible days must have brough to him. But it is more difficult to understand the Queen's acceptance of it. Possibly with her return to Cardozza recollections became too vivid for her, and her shattered courage could not face a fresh rebuff from the man who had saved her. In any case, we gather from the Countess Ardemil's letters that she *expressed* no dissatisfaction though she undoubtedly suffered.

The Countess writes (with less than her usual discre-

tion) : "I would give much to see her (the Queen) flash out with her old spirit at His Highness's formal, deferential manner. What's between them that she makes no effort to retain what was evidently the very savour of life to her? It may be politic on his part, but when did politics ever influence her!"

Yet it was politics that was to alter the situation in the end!

Neither the National Assembly nor the Council of State considered enough had been done for the permanent establishment of the country. The Queen was profoundly mistrusted and her attitude towards her rebellious people did not serve to help matters.

The Royal Palace was ready for her occupation at the end of September. Every effort was made to interest her in her re-installation but she remained entirely apathetic. Nor could she be induced to drive in the town or be seen anywhere in public. All these did not tend to increase her popularity, for outside her immediate circle there was neither knowledge nor appreciation of her mental collapse, and even the nobles seem to have thought of her as nursing a bitter resentment, and only awaiting opportunities to actively retaliate on those who had either deserted or betrayed her. Meetings were held and discussions took place behind the back of her Chief Minister, and everywhere—in slum, in street, in Palace—was heard the whisper: "The Prince *must* stay! We want the Prince, not a woman!"

He set his face like steel against these whispers. In every way he sought to re-establish the authority of the Crown as it had stood, but the united voice of the people was too strong, and on November 11th, the Council of State, at which he was presiding, was asked to receive a deputation from the National Assembly who, in plain terms, put two propositions before the Chief Minister.

Either Queen Tessa must abdicate and he must take the throne himself, or he must marry her and save the dynasty by ruling in her stead! One way or the other way must be chosen, the country refused to be at the mercy of a woman's whims.

The Prince struggled fiercely. He was willing to pledge his honor that he would not desert the country again even against the Queen's will. He must have felt the ironic humor of that, knowing her pitiful dependence on him. But it was no use. They wanted more. They were sick of the dynasty, they wanted a d'Arenzano on the throne. If he would not accept it, they still refused to have the present occupant.

He fought for delay, pointing out her recent widowhood. They replied simply that desperate situations could take no heed of sentiment, and time was the one thing they would not grant him.

He urged on them the ingratitude of their behavior after what he had done, and they returned they could hardly evince greater gratitude than by offering him the Crown itself, which was the course they much preferred him to take; whereupon he broke into storm and swore that nothing would induce him to such an act of treachery.

"Then marry her," said Ardemil bluntly.

In the end he agreed with grim brevity to lay the matter before Her Majesty, and abide by her decision.

"I warn you," he said, "that in pressing the point of remarriage on her at such a time, with a man too, so greatly her senior, you are merely forcing her to abdicate, in which case I wash my hands of Romanzia forever."

They accepted the situation with curious complacency, for men who had urged so hotly the necessity of his continuing to rule. One is tempted to the thought that the Countess Ardemil's intimacy with the Queen and Ardemil's ascendancy

in the Council point to a better knowledge of the broken woman's state of mind than the Prince himself possessed.

He left the Council before it actually dispersed, saying he would send his decision in the morning, and he went back to the Orensē Palace. Dermier—back again in his old place—tells us that he seemed oddly broken, neither savage nor morose, but with a look in his eyes that brought tears to the heart.

For long hours the Prince paced his rom, trying to come to a decision which evaded him. He ruthlessly tried to stamp out the immediate past, those moments in the milliner's shop, the terrified woman in the empty Orensē Palace, the frightened child who had clung to him through the long night journey. These things he told himself were the outcome of circumstances and no criterion of existing facts. Had she not readily accepted his tacit offer to cancel their significance in the return to formal relationship? He would not be swayed—nor let her—by impulses arising from a terrible experience.

Yet behind all this and behind the sharp will of the country and the alternative imposed on him, other pictures would rise, recollections of a defiant child, a little warm hearted friend, an intrepid girl with wings poised for far flight, a woman who lay in his arms wounded, and smiled at him through her pain; and behind that again a veil which he had never allowed himself to lift, hiding possibilities of a great passion and hunger, bursting into flame and falling into dead ashes, unfed and unsatisfied.

If what he had chosen to believe a girlish passion, had been indeed the generous love of a woman he had a key, which he till now had deliberately refused to use, with which to unlock the meaning of the past disastrous four years. Now having trodden out the flame he must beg for mere ashes to

prove his right to save for her the empty shell of her royal dignity!

She would refuse. It was inconceivable to him that she could do anything else. The woman who had sought healing to her wounded pride and rejected love by such devastating means was not likely to forget the origin of her ruined life. Yet he must ask and she must refuse!

It would mean her abdication—and his!

The point towards which his mind groped persistently was: could he save her life once that abdication was achieved? His political sense was too strong not to recognize the danger her continued existence must be to Romanzia. In whatever country she might find shelter she would ever be a focus for fresh revolutions. Her will would count as nothing. There were plenty of men in Romanzia who would see this besides himself. Abdication ran perilously near assassination. Had he stemmed the Revolution and quieted the tumult, and set her on her throne again in vain?

The future was as harassing as the past.

Had he accepted that brave and generous offer of herself four years ago, by now Romanzia would have been in the high tide of prosperity, and the voices that might have mocked at his honor and his disinterestedness might have been silenced before success.

It was useless cursing his own blindness. He had acted as he had thought right. That it had torn his heart to shreds to do it was his sole consolation. If she had suffered, he had suffered too.

He sent word to the Council the next morning that he would comply with their wishes so far as laying their proposition before the Queen, but only on the condition that no pressure should be brought to bear on her, or indeed any mention of the matter made to her except by himself. He also sent to ask an audience of Her Majesty at four o'clock,

and this done he went out alone on horseback, and did not return until it was time to go to the Palace.

The Queen received him in her private boudoir as she had four years ago on a similar autumn day. Her whim for the restoration of this room had been most carefully carried out, and the Prince himself experienced something of a shock to see her standing there in unchanged surroundings, only her black dress and aged face to mark the space of time so overfilled with terrible experiences.

"Why did you send, Paul?" she asked a little wearily. "You know you can always see me."

"As your friend, yes—but as your Minister?"

He still stood. She frowned a little and seated herself on the sofa.

"My Minister exists to keep my Ministry from me; come and sit down."

But though he came nearer he did not sit. He stood, looking at her in the firelight, striving to disentangle two pictures which overlapped each other in his mind.

"It is my purpose—to say to you what your Ministry insist on saying if I do not. I ask you to believe that nothing but the knowledge that what I am deputed to say comes more fittingly from me than from others forces me to it. That, and the knowledge that all that has been achieved in the past year will go for nothing unless you hear me."

"You are frightening me, Paul! Come here, near me!"

She sat up staring at him, and holding out her hands.

"You need not be frighened." His voice was very gentle. "It is I who should be that. Briefly, Madame, the case stands thus. Your Council and your country are yet unsatisfied as to permanent peace; they do me the poor honor to believe I cannot maintain it without still greater authority, though I have pledged my honor to uphold the Constitution as it stands."

She got up now, her eyes brightening.

"They want my abdication?"

There was a little silence; she walked across the room to the still uncurtained window and looked out.

"Is that all? Do you think it is so difficult?" She did not look round.

"It is not all. It is not even what they want or wish. It is only the alternative they insist on."

"Well, what do they want?" She was looking at him now with fierce anxiety.

Were words ever so difficult to utter?—words expressing so baldly the furious hunger in his heart!

"They desire that Your Majesty should again marry."

She broke into a sharp laugh and looked out of the window again.

"Really? Who—this time?"

"I have the honor, Madame, to announce to you your Council's wish that you will consent to accept the hand of your Chief Minister."

Quite slowly she turned and leaned on the back of a chair, her hands shaking pitifully.

He looked steadily at the ground and went on speaking.

"That is what your Council deputes me to say. What I have to say myself is this, that if you, Madame, could by the greatness of your woman's soul endure to consider this thing, I, understanding the sacrifice you are making, swear that so far as it lies in man to govern his fate, you shall never have cause to repent it, that ——" His voice failed. He stood there, staring at the floor—silent.

How could he plead? He had seen her face brighten at the mere thought of this abdication from which he would save her.

Her voice came so quietly across the space between them

that it hardly broke the stillness. It was oddly subdued and wistful.

"You have taught me, Paul, that the only rule of life for those who are so unhappy as to wear a crown, is duty. It is not always easy to know where it lies. Tell me—now."

But he groaned.

"No, no. I dare not. You must find out yourself."

"Then, Prince, will you tell my Council I am pleased to accept the hand of my Chief Minister."

Her voice faltered, and, having spoken, she bit her lip and turned again to the window. This then was the end of their long silent struggle. She had won. He would marry her—to save her Crown! It was a matter of duty.

Yet, even so, her need of him was so great that she must take what was offered, though it was like warming her frozen hands over dead ashes. Slow difficult tears welled up to her eyes. She seemed to stand on the verge of an immense loneliness that wanted to engulf her, where neither voice of man nor God would sound forever.

"Tessa!"

The one word came to her across space, calling her back, vibrating with love, urgent, passionate—tender!

She saw him clearly for the first time, standing there, waiting, compelling—and with a little cry she ran to the shelter of his arms, safe from the loneliness forever.

IV

They were married in January. However private the actual ceremony might be, nothing could have exceeded the spontaneous joy of the people, who celebrated the event with bonfires and decorations and feastings. The Prince and his wife cared little, for they knew nothing. They set out immediately after the ceremony for Arenzano, or rather Orensē, for he took her first to a small castellated hunting

lodge, high up in the mountains. The snow was deep round them but the pines were a rampart against the winds, and the sun shone, and covered the white ground with jewels; and the clean sharpness of the air seemed to sing in chorus with the blue sky. And they tramped up and down the mountain paths, and drove in sledges through miles of silent, whispering forest, and found the frozen source of the stream. And in the evening they sat by the great wood fires, and she wore the gown of costly white fur he had given her, and color came back to the white face, and peace to her terrified eyes.

But on the first evening as she sat before the fire in her white fur robe, she said to him:

"Paul, how was it you came to me at all at that dreadful time?"

"Max sent for me," he answered huskily.

"And you just came?"

He was silent a moment, and then took out a little leather case from his pocket, and from that a folded paper, and put it in her hands. As she opened it he went on his kness before her and hid his face against her.

"Tessa," he whispered. "Let me make my confession, and think of me what you will. *That* was his *second* call—I refused the first!"

The note was but a line and it ran:

"Paul, if she is to be saved, you must come—Max."

Her hands touched his head caressingly. She thought with tenderness how grey it was growing.

"And you came for that?"

"God forgive me, but it took that to bring me!"

"Only that—after all I'd done?"

Then more swiftly, to stop the protest, she went on: "There is something else I must ask, Paul; that day when

they flung names at me, why did you tell them they lied? I must know, Paul!" Her voice was urgent.

He raised his head and looked straight into her eyes.

"Did you ever think you could deceive *me*—I *knew!*"

At that she gave a little cry and, catching his hands, kissed them.

"That is faith," she whispered, half to herself.

"No—Love!" he answered.

Outside the snow fell anew and blotted out the footsteps that had soiled its white radiance.

V

Thus after stress and storm the great Prince found for a time a haven of refuge in a woman's love, where he might re-gather his strength, his ambitions, his faith and prepare to pilot his country again to the harbor of her destiny.

Not yet was the voyage over, not yet the far-off dreams of his boyhood realized, but he himself had found that which he had not sought and out of the vast sea of circumstances had attracted to himself that which was his and from which he might not be safely sundered.

Here let us leave him for the time in security and peace. A man fashioned on the anvil of the gods, pre-destined for great purposes, great joys, great sorrows, great virtues, great sins. A man to whom, in spite of his faults, men gave their loyal devotion and women, instinctive affection and who in his own country is ever known by the one title—The Great Prince!

THE END

-ZHH
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